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DICK DEAD-EYE, THE BOY SMUGGLER; Or, The Cruise of the Vixen.

BY COLONEL PRENTISS INGRAHAM.



"NOW SWING THAT PIRATE UP! HE AT LEAST SHALL NOT ESCAPE," SAID CAPTAIN NORMAN.

Dick Dead-Eye,

THE BOY SMUGGLER;

OR,

THE CRUISE OF THE VIXEN.

BY COLONEL PRENTISS INGRAHAM,
AUTHOR OF "THE FLYING YANKEE," "RALPH
ROY," "DIAMOND DICK," ETC., ETC.

CHAPTER I. THE FATAL REEF.

"I TELL yer, messmates, the sloop sees ther storm a-comin' an' is pushin' her bows under to git inter ther basin afore it breaks."

"It may, an' it may not, for the gale is lashin' things white out yonder."

"It hain't the storm the Flyaway is a-runnin' from; look there!"

The speakers were two of a group of a dozen rough-looking men, the fishermen of the coast, and some said wreckers and smugglers as well.

They stood upon a cedar-clad point of land that ran out from the main shore and formed an arm to shelter a little haven lying beyond.

Beneath the shadow of a range of hills, and half-hidden among the pines and cedars, were a score of rude huts, while in the harbor lay their fishing-smacks, and the white beach was dotted with their skiffs.

Seaward, innumerable islands, some only half an acre in size, others containing a hundred acres, were visible, running out nearly two leagues from the mainland, and up and down the coast as far as the eye could reach, and it was upon a trim-looking sloop of perhaps sixty tons, crowded with canvas and driving swiftly along through the isle channels, that the group of men were looking when the remark of one of them opens this story.

The object pointed out by the second speaker was a rakish-looking schooner that suddenly glided out from behind a large island, and stood on after the sloop with evidently hostile intentions.

The sloop was heading down the coast, dodging in and out among the islands, as if to throw her pursuer off the track; but persistently, and gaining rapidly, the schooner came on, her deck crowded with men, and her guns run out, for it was an armed vessel, with the stars and stripes flying at her peak.

"It is that cursed revenue-cutter, as I live!" cried one of the men, as the schooner shot fully into view.

"Yes, and he is gaining on the sloop, too, lads! By heaven! I wish the storm would break and make the cruiser take in sail."

The storm, which was sweeping landward, black and threatening, was yet a long way off; but the sympathy of the group on the cliff point seemed to be wholly with the flying sloop, and when at first they had observed the breaking of the gale upon the little craft, they now were anxious that it would do so, as it would at once end the chase.

"If the cutter turns into the channel between the Cow and the Calf islands, lads, he has got a pilot on board," said one of the men, referring to a large and small isle more than a league away from where they were.

"He has got a pilot, then, for there she goes! Who's got a glass, for we must see that traitor's face," angrily remarked one of the men.

"There hain't a glass in the crowd. See! he runs that dangerous channel like a fish, and he'll soon get in range of the sloop."

It was true. The cutter, without slackening speed, rushed boldly into the narrow and winding channel through the two islands, and following the same course of the sloop ahead, soon darted out into comparatively open water beyond.

"There goes his guns, lads. I pray the Flyaway may weather them safe."

As the man spoke a puff of smoke burst from the cutter's bows, and soon after came the deep boom of the gun and the shot struck the sea not far astern of the little sloop.

"The chances are ag'in' Captain Jasper, lads, an' if he don't dodge the cutter among yonder islands, the storm is all that can save him; but who is the pilot on the schooner? I wants to know?"

"Whoever he is, he must be tracked down and killed; we must have no traitors among us, boys," said a man who had not before spoken, and who had been most attentively watching the chase.

"Ha! the storm! the storm!" cried every voice, as a sudden gust of wind swept over the point, and large drops of rain began to fall, while the roar of the gale was now loud and ominous, and the sea was lashed into foam just beyond the chain of islands.

Yet, neither the sloop nor schooner slackened sail, but rushed on as before.

"Captain Jasper will lose his stick if he don't take in that sail. See, she bends over and buries her scuppers deep."

"And the schooner is feeling it too. Ha! down go his sails, lads, but the Flyaway holds on."

The cutter was suddenly seen to shorten sail rapidly, and the men, thoroughly trained, soon had the pretty vessel running under only sufficient canvas to drive her along.

"Is Jasper a fool? See, the gale is upon him, and he has not taken in his sail. Ha! is he gone, lads?"

"I can't see; the mist hides both the schooner and the sloop. Here we have it, boys!" and the entire crowd of men shrunk back to the little shelter of rocks, as the fierce gale swept over the cliff.

At that moment a slender form dashed into their midst, and sunk down under the overhanging tree-clad cliff.

"Estelle?" cried every voice.

"Yes, I came to see what the firing was about on the bay," shouted back the young girl, for she was hardly fifteen years of age.

"This is a bad blow for you to be out in, girl," said one of the men, not unkindly.

"I have been out in worse, Freeman; but what shot was that I heard?"

"The cutter chasing the Flyaway home."

"And my father, and Dick?" asked the girl anxiously.

"Both safe on the sloop—if the sloop's safe, but we hav'n't seen either craft since the storm struck them."

"The storm I do not dread: but the schooner—ah, the gale is sweeping over," and the maiden arose to her feet and glanced anxiously out over the island-dotted boy, still hidden by the dense mist.

Though a mere girl, she was yet of a beautifully-rounded form, graceful, and slender, though clad in a rough home-spun dress, worn rather short, and displaying a pair of tiny feet, incased in rough canvas shoes.

Her hair was of a red-gold hue, wavy, and wound about her head in heavy masses, while every feature of her face was faultless, and bore the impress of a noble nature.

Across her shoulders, and in strange contrast with the rest of her attire, hung a red silk scarf, beautifully embroidered, and a sailor's hat was upon her head.

Standing gracefully, with a ship's spy-glass to her eye, she made a fanciful, striking picture, with the rocky cliff towering above her and the group of rough-looking men in the background.

"I see the sloop; she is lying to."

"Hurrah!" broke from the men at the girl's words, while one asked:

"And the schooner?"

"She is lying to, also—No, she is getting under way again, and so is the sloop."

All now came out from their shelter and gazed down upon the wild waters, while the storm went rushing on over the land.

There lay the two vessels, in nearly the same positions as when last seen, and neither of them apparently hurt by the gale that had passed over them.

"Captain Jasper is in as bad a fix as before, lads, and now has to run for it again," said one of the group.

"Yes; and the cutter is after him again. I say, Estelle, look at the schooner with your glass and say who holds her wheel."

The maiden at once turned her glass upon the cutter, and a cry as of alarm at once broke from her lips, and the men gathered around her.

"It is my father!"

"No, no, girl! you do not tell the truth. Captain Jasper is no traitor!" cried the man known as Freeman, and he seized the glass from her hands. "By Heaven! she speaks the truth, lads. Jasper Lucas is the pilot on board the schooner!" he said, impressively, and something like a groan broke from the men.

"And the sloop? Who runs the sloop?" cried several voices.

The man turned the glass upon the sloop, which under close-reefed canvas was bounding like a race-horse over the rough waters.

"It is Dick, the Boy Smuggler!"

"Give me the glass, Freeman," said Estelle, in commanding tones, and she leveled it at the sloop.

"It is Dick; and father the pilot of the schooner! What can it mean?"

"It means, girl, that Jasper Lucas is a traitor, and his son Dick is not. By Neptune! lads,

the sloop will be captured, for the cutter is shaking out the reefs!" cried Freeman.

"And so is the sloop—see!" cried Estelle.

"Bravo! Hurrah for the boy; but the little craft won't stand the pressure in this gale—see there!"

It seemed as if the speaker's words were true, for the sloop swept over until all believed she would capsize under the fearful pressure; but righted quickly and again went driving on, her decks drowned by the waters that swept over her, and her sharp bows hidden under the wall of waters in front.

"The schooner is as stiff as a church steeple, and she is overhauling the sloop fast—run, Dick, or the Flyaway is lost."

It now became evident that unless the sloop could gain the shelter of some larger islands, a mile ahead, and keep them between her and the cutter until night came on, she would be captured, and all on the cliff looked gloomy, while Estelle silently held her glass one instant on the little Flyaway, and the next turned it upon the cutter.

"I tell you the boy is getting all out of the sloop she can do, and he handles her nobly. By Heaven! he will round the Cedar Island!"

A cry broke from the group, as they saw that the sloop was running for the larger island, known as the Cedar, having just passed through a danger channel between two reefs.

But the cry of joy turned into a yell of dismay, as the tall, slender mast of the sloop was seen to suddenly snap in twain, and the mass of canvas come to the deck like a falling cloud, while the little craft lay a wreck upon the waters, with the cutter coming in her wake, and not a mile distant from her.

As soon as the sloop's headway was checked a momentary scene of excitement was visible on board, and then a large skiff was seen to leave her side, filled with men, and pull rapidly for the shore, while a volume of smoke suddenly burst from the Flyaway's cabin.

"Brave Dick! He has set her afire and then taken to his boat—so, Mister Jasper, you are foiled by your son," cried Freeman; but his lips had hardly uttered the words when a yell of delight broke from every lip except Estelle's, as the cutter, which had entered the narrow Reef-channel, as it was called, was suddenly seen to come to a sudden stop; a terrific crash followed, and the tall masts of the cutter went down like falling trees.

Instantly the air was filled with the wild cries of the wrecked crew, while on the cliff the group of men danced in frenzied joy, and Freeman shouted in stentorian tones:

"We misjudged him, lads, for Jasper Lucas is no traitor. Three cheers for the old man, lads!"

The cheers were given with a right good will, and then one of the men suddenly cried:

"Look at the gal! Where in Satan's name are she goin'?"

Down the steep pathway, her hair shaken loose, and floating behind her in heavy waves, the maiden was bounding like a deer.

"She is goin' to ther cabin with ther news for ther old lady," said another, and they turned

their gaze again upon the vessel that had dashed upon the fatal reef, and over which the waves were now breaking in fury.

CHAPTER II.

ESTELLE.

WITH sure step, and with marvelous speed, Estelle bounded down the rocky hillside until she reached the white beach, and, after a short run, came to a long, canoe-shaped skiff, light as a feather, and with two oars lying in the bottom.

With a strength one would not have given her credit for, she shoved it into the water, at a point, where a huge rock, a short distance from the shore, formed a breakwater. Springing in she seated herself and seized the oars, then pulled boldly out into the rough waters.

At a glance it was evident that she was a thoroughly trained oarswoman, and her skill and strength combined sent the light life-skiff, for such it really was, swiftly over the wild waves, and straight out toward the fatal reef upon which the revenue-cutter lay wrecked, her crew clinging to her, and the seas breaking over her decks.

It was a terrible duty she had set for herself, and one that would tax a man's strength and nerve, for the danger was great; but she felt no fear, and her lips were set with a determination to reach the wreck or perish in the effort.

Taking advantage of a small island that lay in her course, she rowed close in under its shelter to rest her straining arms, when she was startled by a hoarse call:

"Pull ashore here, Estelle; I am here."

Instantly she rested upon her oars, and turning, beheld crouched down beneath a moss-covered rock the form of a man.

He was but half dressed, and his long hair and beard were wet through, while his dark eyes flashed savagely.

"Oh, father! how could you be so cruel as to wreck that beautiful vessel?"

The girl spoke reproachfully, and with a skillful motion she turned the stern of her boat toward the little island, so that she could face the man whom she addressed as father.

"I could not help it, Estelle; I was in the lion's den, and I had either to wreck her or let them catch the sloop. Pull closer in, and I will spring into the skiff."

"No, father, for you will not allow me to save these men if I do. You are in no danger of your life—you have swum this far and can easily reach the shore; or, if you care to remain here, I will come out for you to-night."

"What! would you betray us, girl?"

"No, father; but I will not see those brave men die while I can save them. Within an hour the schooner will go to pieces."

"Estelle, I warn you not to do as you intend. By Heaven! you will bring down trouble, perhaps death, upon many of us!"

"I will not betray you, father, but I will be humane," was the calm reply.

With a muttered oath, the man sprung from the rock toward the boat; but the maiden quickly gave a pull on the oars and sent it out of his reach, while she cried:

"Forgive me, father, but my duty lies there,

to save those men," and with a strong pull she continued on her way, while the man, bitterly cursing her, swum with strong stroke toward the mainland.

Suddenly he turned, and as he rose on a wave, glanced back over the waters.

"Heavens! Is the boy mad, too? As I live, he is pulling toward the wreck!"

The cause of the remark of the bold swimmer, was in beholding a second boat bounding over the rough waters—a large skiff, pulled by four strong oarsmen, and with the form of a youth in the stern, his hand upon the tiller.

It was the same youth that had been recognized at the helm of the sloop, and whom the men on the cliff had called the Boy Smuggler.

He was apparently about eighteen years of age, well formed, and dressed only in duck pants and blue woolen shirt, while his head was bare and his hair, worn long, was hanging in wet curls upon his broad shoulders.

His face was one to attract the attention of both men and women, for it was fearless, too reckless, handsome and strangely firm and stern for one of his years.

Suddenly, as he glanced over the water his eyes fell upon the life-skiff rowed by Estelle.

"Holy Neptune!"

"What is it, lad?" asked an old oarsman, at the exclamation of the youth.

"There is Estelle, alone in the life-skiff, pulling toward the wreck."

"You don't say so, lad! We'll have to run across her bow and tell her to put back or she'll give us all away."

"She'll not betray us, Jack; she is going to the aid of the crew; but I'll steer so as to get near enough to warn her not to tell that we are other than we seem, honest fishermen."

"True, lad; but after we get the blue-coats out of the scrape they *might* turn on us."

The two boats were now rapidly nearing each other, and the youth soon hailed:

"Life-skiff ahoy!"

With a startled cry Estelle turned her head, for she had not observed the other boat, as her glances over her shoulder, to direct her course, had been always in the direction of the wrecked schooner.

"Oh Dick!"

It was all that she could say.

"Which way, Estelle?"

"To the wreck, Dick," and she said it with foreboding, as she feared the other boat had come to prevent her humane intention, and her heart bounded with joy as Dick replied:

"Just like you to risk your life for others. We are also going there, for, of course, as *honest fishermen*, we could not see a wrecked crew drown before our eyes, and not make an effort to save them."

"You are a noble fellow, Dick; but do you not fear to trust yourself on the schooner?"

"Oh no, for of course we know nothing about the sloop, you know; but be careful, or you'll be swamped yet."

"No fear of me, Dick," and the young girl again pulled bravely on, the two boats now running side by side and their course anxiously watched by the crew of the wreck, two-score men in all.

Upon the forecastle of the schooner, the safest place, the men were huddled, officers and all, while every wave that struck the hull caused it to tremble from stem to stern, and the crew to dread that it would go to pieces before the boats could reach them.

"This has been a bad business, Randolph, and I am sorry that accursed pilot was washed overboard and drowned, for I would like to hang him for his treachery," said an officer of middle age and in captain's uniform, addressing a young lieutenant near him.

"You are convinced then, Captain Norman, that the man was a traitor?" asked Lieutenant Harvey Randolph.

"Yes; he saw that we were going to take the sloop, and he deliberately put the helm down and dashed up upon this reef. In the wreck I did not see what became of him, but he was doubtless borne overboard by the huge wave that swept over us and carried half a dozen of the crew to death; but, Randolph, is not that a woman in the leading boat?" and Captain Norman gazed searchingly upon the life-skiff.

"Yes, sir, it is a woman; I see her hair down her back. It is strange that the men in the other boat should allow her to thus risk her life," said the young lieutenant.

"Pardon, your honor, but the small skiff came out from under the cliff yonder, and the big one from the island," said the boatswain, and the eyes of all on the schooner attentively watched the coming boats, until they ran close in under the lee of the wreck.

"Ah, my brave fellows, you have come to our rescue," said Captain Ethan Norman, kindly.

"Yes, sir, we saw your danger and came to your aid," and Dick Lucas ran his boat close in to the reef.

"Well, we will come on board, but I have forty men, and you cannot carry them all."

"We must, sir; the tide is coming in and the schooner will soon go to pieces. My boat and the life-skiff will carry all, sir."

As Dick spoke Estelle skillfully brought her boat under the schooner's stern, and looking up her eyes met those of Captain Norman.

"Heaven have mercy! Girl, who are you?" cried Ethan Norman, starting back and turning deadly pale.

"That is my adopted sister, sir, who risked her life to come to your aid, not knowing that I had also started. You have no time to lose, captain," said Dick in a tone that made the crew realize fully their danger, and hastily swing themselves over into the boat, while their commander stood gazing upon Estelle, a strange look upon his face.

In a few moments all were in the boats, which, loaded down to the gunwales, started upon their perilous trip landward, Estelle still holding the oars of the skiff, and firmly refusing to give them up, as she said she knew better how to manage the little craft.

As they rowed shoreward, threatened frequently with being swamped, Captain Norman sat in the stern of the skiff, his eyes fixed upon the maiden, who seemed too much taken up with her duty to observe his constant gaze.

At length they reached the little bay, and

landed in safety—a few men meeting them upon the beach.

"Gentlemen, I am glad to offer you hospitality, but sorry that your misfortune has made it necessary."

Both Dick and Estelle started at the sound of the deep voice, and turning quickly beheld none other than Jasper Lucas near them—Jasper Lucas indeed, but wholly changed from the long-haired, long-bearded man who had wrecked the schooner.

He was dressed in a suit of dark clothes, wore a white shirt, and a slouch hat shaded his face, from which the long beard had been clean shaven, while the hair was cut short, changing his appearance completely.

"I thank you, sir, and shall be forced to accept your hospitality," said Captain Norman.

"Then I can entertain yourself and officers, sir, while the neighbors will look after your crew. Come with me, gentlemen."

Captain Norman was surprised. He expected to meet rude and ignorant fishermen, and he was welcomed with the courtly grace of a refined gentleman, while the youth and maiden, who had so fearlessly come to his rescue, were certainly not of a common order of people.

"My cabin is not extensive, sir, and we live in a humble way; but such as we have is at your disposal," and Jasper Lucas ushered his guests into his little home, while the seamen went off with some of the fishermen.

It was a cabin containing but five rooms, all on the floor, and nestled away under the hill-side presented the appearance of a comfortable home, while around it was a small flower-garden, and not far away a vegetable plot.

Within, all was neatness and comfort, and a matron of perhaps forty years of age, with a sad face and dignified mien, came to meet them.

"My wife, Mrs. Lucas, gentlemen. Now be seated, and we will soon have a good supper for you," said Captain Jasper, as Jasper Lucas was always called by the fishermen.

Captain Norman, Lieutenant Randolph, and the three other officers took seats, and then the former remarked abruptly:

"Captain Lucas—for such I believe the men called you—I am greatly surprised to find such a man as you are living in this wild region, for I was led to believe that a very different class of people inhabited this part of the Maine coast."

"We are slandered, sir, for the acts of a few smugglers and wreckers who have their haunts not far from here, it is said. I believe you were chasing the smuggler sloop when you ran on the reef?" quietly responded Captain Jasper.

"Yes; I was led into a trap by a fellow who lost his life for his treachery."

"Ah! How, may I ask?"

"Why, as I sailed out of Portland harbor a small sailing-skiff crossed my bows, and the fellow asked to come on board, and I found him to be rather an intelligent man, who professed enmity against the smugglers and offered to pilot me to their rendezvous."

"I was then on my way to an island, where it was said the smuggler sloop was anchored, so told him I would go to the haunt of the men if

I did not find the Flyaway at the reported anchorage.

"But there I found the craft, which put off at sight of the cruiser, and gave me a long and lively chase until we reached this bay, when, as you saw doubtless, the treacherous pilot ran me on the sunken reef to save the sloop, and I lost my schooner and half a dozen good men, washed overboard when she struck; but, tell me, captain, who was the maiden that came to my rescue."

"My daughter, sir, and the youth was my son, Dick."

"Your daughter? Then I am mistaken," said Captain Norman, thoughtfully.

"I should have said, sir, my adopted daughter, for I have but the one child, Dick, though Estelle has ever been as an own daughter to me."

"Estelle? and your adopted daughter? Great God! can I be right after all? Her face, her name, and—oh, Captain Lucas, for the love of Heaven, tell me who that girl is?" and Captain Norman arose and stood before the fisherman.

"All I know I will tell you, sir. Eight years ago I took her off a boat I found adrift at sea. She was with two others in the boat, who never recovered from their sufferings, and they are buried upon the hill yonder. One of them was Estelle's mother."

"Her name?" gasped rather than asked, Captain Norman.

"The same as her daughter's—Estelle Norman."

"Captain Lucas, *that girl is my own daughter*," and the strong man sunk back upon the chair he had risen from and buried his face in his hands.

CHAPTER III.

THE PARTING.

It was the morning after the storm, and the sun was just rising above the horizon of the now placid sea, as two persons stood upon the cliff, gazing out over the calm scene.

Their faces were pale and sad, and for some moments they were silent, but then the silence was broken with:

"Estelle, I asked you to meet me here this morning, for, after what happened in the cabin last night, I felt that I would not be able to see you again alone."

"Was it not all very strange, Dick, the way I found my father?"

"Strange indeed, and I for one regret it, Stel, as it will take you from me."

"I am sorry to leave you, and also your parents, Dick, for, be what they may, they have ever been as a kind father and mother to me, as you have been a brother."

"Brother! Estelle, you know that we have never looked upon each other as brother and sister, and that we have loved each other for years; but now you go from me, and I will be forgotten."

"No, no, Dick; never can I forget you, come what may, and you can come to see me often, and—"

"Your father will never allow me to come near you, knowing what I am," bitterly said the youth.

"But he will never know; he believes you and your father are only fishermen now, and little dreams that it was Captain Jasper who wrecked his vessel on the reef, and you that commanded the Flyaway that led him on to ruin. Ah no, he does not for a moment connect you with the smugglers."

"But will you not tell him all?"

"Dick!"

There was a world of meaning in the one word.

"Forgive me, Stel, for I knew not how you could help it."

"Dick Lucas, it is hard to forgive you those words. Eight years ago, after the foundering of the vessel upon which my mother and father were passengers, your father picked us up adrift at sea, and since then I have loved him and you all most dearly."

"Now, after the happy past, and I have been happy even in this wild scene, Dick, could I prove a traitor to those whom I so dearly love?"

"Never will I be so untrue to the promptings of my own heart, and, go where I may, come what will, I will never betray the secrets, that I know of who and what are the coast smugglers."

"Bless you, Estelle, and forgive me. For myself I do not care, but for my poor father, whose life would be the forfeit, if it became known that he was the captain of the Flyaway."

"We have not intended taking life, as you know; but when hard run by the Government officers, we have had to escape at all hazards."

"Dick, I wish you would lead a different life. The wrong you and the others of the band do, I do not fully understand; but it must be great when you are so hunted down."

"Last night my father offered you a position when he gets another vessel. Why will you not accept it?"

"I will not leave my father, when he is daily and nightly hunted down by the hounds of the law."

"What I am, I am, and such I must remain; but you, Estelle, will soon turn your love for me into contempt, when the world's verdict against smuggling you fully understand. So be it; I will ever love you, Estelle."

She held out her hands to him, and then, moved by a sudden impulse, she threw her arms around his neck and kissed him passionately.

"Come, Dick, we must return; but let us go by mother's grave," she said, suddenly releasing herself from his strong embrace.

Back from the cliff they wended their way, down into a lonely vale, into which only the midday sun would penetrate, so overhung was it by rocky, cedar-clad hills.

Then before them were a number of humble graves, only rude white boards at their heads carved with the names of those who lay beneath.

One, however, was more pretentious in its marking, for a neatly carved cedar cross was above the humble mound upon which grew wild flowers carefully tended.

Upon the cross, cut with artistic style, were the letters:

MRS. ESTELLE NORMAN.

"Wrecked at sea in the barque

"METROPOLIS,

"Bound from New York to Portland, May
"18th 18—. Picked up in an open boat
"May 25th, and died same day."

This was the work of Dick Lucas, and almost daily had he accompanied Estelle to that lowly grave in the valley where rested her mother.

As the two approached the spot, on that morning after the storm, they started suddenly as they beheld the form of a man bending above the grave.

"It is your father, Estelle; go to him," said Dick in a whisper, and he silently stole away, while the young girl noiselessly approached.

"Father!"

The man started, turned quickly, and held forth his arms.

"Come, Estelle, my dear little daughter. I came here to see your mother's grave, and it is right that we should together mourn."

For some moments they stood in silence, and then Captain Norman asked:

"Whose hand so skillfully carved this cross and lettering, my daughter?"

"Dick did it, father."

"Ah, that handsome adopted brother of yours. He seems like a noble youth, Estelle."

"He is, father, and I love him very dearly," innocently answered the girl.

But the words set Captain Norman to thinking, and his brow contracted with a frown.

He had found his daughter whom he had long believed dead, for the loss of the Metropolis he had heard of and believed all on board had gone down.

Now she was rapidly growing into a beautiful woman and was an heiress to vast wealth which she would inherit from her mother's estate, and it would not do for her to be heart-bound to an humble fisher-lad.

No, she must go to some fashionable school, be educated as she deserved to be, and fitted for the position in life which she must hold.

"I had determined to offer the boy a position with me—procure for him a midshipman's berth; but no, I will not do so now, for it might be dangerous; for, young as Estelle may be, I believe she cares more for the youth than all else in the world."

Such were the thoughts that passed through the mind of Captain Ethan Norman; but he said, quietly:

"Yes, he is a fine fellow, Estelle, and his parents seem nice people—so different from what I expected to find, as I was led to believe that all men on this part of the coast were smugglers, and in some way connected with that witch of the wave the Flyaway! You do not know of smugglers hereabout, do you, Estelle?"

"Oh, we frequently hear of them, father, and often see the Flyaway running up and down the coast."

Well, her fate is sealed at last, for her timbers strew the beach this morning along with those of my schooner; but I hope the smugglers

may yet be taken, for they are a desperate band of fellows."

Estelle made no reply, and the father and daughter walked slowly back to the cabin, where Mrs. Lucas had prepared for her guests a most substantial breakfast.

After the meal was ended Captain Norman held a long conversation with his host, the result of which was that Jasper Lucas politely but firmly refused all remuneration for his care of Estelle, and also declined to allow Dick to enter the navy, for his better nature getting the best of him, Captain Norman had offered the youth a midshipman's warrant.

Then the party all went on board a large fishing-smack that belonged to Captain Jasper, and Dick, with a crew of half a dozen fishermen, was to take them to Portland.

It was a sad parting between Estelle and her adopted parents, for they dearly loved the girl, and she was also devoted to them, and gazed with tearful eyes back at the little cabin as the smack glided seaward.

A thorough seaman, and acquainted with every foot of cruising-ground along the coast, Dick Lucas guided his vessel skillfully among the islands, and in good time entered the harbor of Portland and dropped anchor just off the ruins of what was an old fort in the war of 1812.

"My gallant lad, I insist upon your accepting this from me," and Captain Norman extended a purse, heavy with gold.

The face of Dick Lucas flushed, and he seemed about to make an angry reply; but catching the eye of Estelle, he said quietly:

"Your gold you can give to my crew, if it pleases you to do so, Captain Norman, for I will never accept it."

"Nor the berth of a middy, either?" asked the captain, as he threw the purse to the crew.

Dick's eyes sparkled; but he sighed and answered:

"It is my parents' wish that I remain with them. Farewell, sir. Good-by, Estelle. Don't forget me."

He could say no more and held out his hand; but Estelle was a creature of impulse, and sprung into his arms, while she burst into tears.

With an angry exclamation, her father drew her away, and springing into his boat, with pale face, Dick Lucas was rowed rapidly back on board the sloop, which at once flew out of the harbor under full sail.

CHAPTER IV.

THE TRAITOR.

SIX months have passed away since the sloop Flyaway and the Revenue schooner left their wooden bones upon the beach that stormy day, and Captain Norman was seated in the cabin of his new vessel, a larger, better craft even than was the one he had last, for the smugglers had been more active than ever of late, and the Government was most anxious to bring them to justice.

"A seaman has come on board, sir, and asks to see you," said a sailor, entering the cabin and addressing the commander.

"Send him down," was the curt reply, and immediately after a weather-beaten individual entered, who saluted politely.

"Well, sir, what is your business with me?" and Captain Norman eyed his visitor searchingly.

"I've important information to impart, captain," said the man, slyly.

"About what?"

"The smugglers."

"Ha! what know you of them?" eagerly asked the captain.

"I am one myself, sir."

In an instant Captain Norman was upon his feet.

"Then I shall have you seized at once."

"Hold a bit, captain. I didn't run my neck into the noose for nothing. Hear what I have to say, first!"

"I am listening," and Captain Norman sunk back in his easy-chair once more.

"There's another Flyaway afloat."

"I know that well; she has been at her devilish work for nearly six months," impatiently said the captain, and then added:

"There is another Vixen afloat, too, and I'll hunt down the Flyaway very soon."

"She's fast, captain."

"So is the Vixen."

"She's got a larger crew than the old Flyaway, captain."

"So has this Vixen."

"She's armed, captain."

"Ha! say you so? Then she is going to show fight."

"She's got a flag, captain."

"A flag, and what, pray?"

"A scarlet field, sir."

"And what does that mean?"

"Fight unto the bitter end."

"Ah! she has turned pirate then?"

"Mighty near in act, captain, but in name she's only a wrecker, or smuggler."

"So much the better; I will have the right to hang the whole gang when I catch them."

"When you catch them, yes, captain."

"You doubt my ability so to do, my man?"

"I do."

"And why?"

"The Flyaway sails like the wind—she has a determined crew and a score of secret haunts into which she can go to hide. If you would follow her there you could only do so in your boats, as she draws less water than does your schooner, and you would be beaten off."

"I will make the attempt, at any rate."

"I can serve you, captain."

"You?"

"Yes, for, as I said before, I am one of the smugglers; but I want terms."

"Name them."

"Pardon for my past offenses, and twenty-five thousand dollars the day you capture the band."

"This is a large sum."

"You will make a great name; besides, you will capture fifty times that sum in smuggled goods awaiting a market, and hang nearly four-score desperate pirates, for they are nothing more."

"I accept your terms, but I also have conditions."

"I am listening, sir," coolly said the smuggler.

"I was tricked once before and lost my schooner by one of that same band, and I intend to make sure this time."

"I will tell you more, sir; the man who tricked you was the smuggler chief, Captain Jasper."

"What, Jasper Lucas! No, it was not he, for he had a long beard and—"

"Nonsense, captain; you should not be so easily deceived, and I will prove my words."

"The man who was the adopted father of my daughter, who cared for her so kindly, was no villain, but an honest fisherman."

"Bah! I tell you he was the man who ran your vessel on the reef; he was in Portland, and learning that you had ascertained where the Flyaway was at anchor, awaiting his return, he put off in a small boat to return to her, but you overtook him and he boldly boarded you with a story which you believed, and tried to lead you astray; but you held on after the Flyaway, discovered her and gave chase, and his son being in command—"

"No, no, that is impossible. Remember, I can prove the truth of your words within the hour, and if you lie to me you shall be hung."

"I'll take the chances, captain. I tell you the boy set the sloop on fire, landed his crew, and then nobly went to your aid in another boat with several men, while his father, after wrecking the schooner swam ashore, shaved off his long beard, cropped his hair close, changed his clothes and received you as an *honest fisherman*.

"This is a remarkable story you tell, sir, and woe to you if I prove it untrue; but, who commands the present Flyaway?"

"Captain Jasper, and Dick, his son, is his first luff."

"And you know where they are now?"

"I do; until three days ago I was boatswain of the Flyaway."

"You are bold to make such a confession."

"No, for you have promised me pardon."

"Prove your words true and I will keep my promise. Now tell me what motive you have in betraying your wicked comrades."

"Revenge!"

The words came hoarsely forth, and the dark eyes flashed fire.

"Revenge will drive a man to almost any act."

"Ay, and a woman too—I'll tell you, captain, how it is."

"Jasper Lucas is my step-brother, and I am several years his senior."

"When I was three years old my father married again, and Jasper, the child by his second wife, became the favorite, and I was cast aside, and had to put up with many ills."

"As we grew to manhood we both loved the same girl, and he won her; but I was determined he should not marry her, and shot him down upon his bridal night, and fled to save my neck."

"But he did not die, and, after years of wandering, I returned to find him living happily with his wife, and they had one son, the boy Dick."

"Well, how it happened I need not say; but one night a man was found dead near the Lucas home, and Jasper's knife was in his breast, and as they were enemies for some cause or other, of course my step-brother was arrested, tried and found guilty of murdering him."

"He was sentenced to the gallows, but escaped, the night before the day appointed for his execution, his wife having aided him, and together they fled."

"It was long years before I found them; but, having drifted from bad to worse, I joined the smuggler band four months ago to find him their leader, for he had sought refuge upon the coast, turned fisherman, and gradually become an outlaw."

"And was he guilty of the murder for which he was condemned?"

"Of course not, captain; how dull you are—I killed the man for cheating me at cards and arranged it to have Jasper suspected."

"You are a doubly-dyed villain, and I regret that I offered you pardon."

"No, no, captain, for it will be to your advantage to pardon me."

"Not if I revoke my promise and force you to guide me to the haunts of the smugglers."

"Captain Norman, just try that on. I suppose you remember how Christians have died and suffered torture for their creed, but you will find in me one man who can suffer as much, if not more, for deviltry."

There was a wicked glitter in the man's eye and a look of determination that proved to Captain Norman he could not be forced to betray his comrades.

"These are not the days of the Inquisition, or I would try torture to make you speak and act; but as I gave my promise I will keep it."

"For Jasper Lucas I feel deep sympathy, for the victim of unfortunate circumstances, he drifted into crime; still he is none the less guilty and must suffer for his deeds, though I regret exceedingly that you will triumph in your revenge over him."

"Now what do you propose to do?"

"Guide you to the smugglers' haunts, place you in possession of their booty, show you how to capture the Flyaway, and give the band into your hands."

"For which dastardly service you expect me to pardon you and give you twenty-five thousands dollars."

"Correct, captain."

"Very well; so be it; but I hope to catch and hang you, too, one of these days."

"So be it, captain, if you can!"

"Now, sir, I will place you in irons, until I ascertain if you have spoken the truth. Ho, the deck!"

"Ay, ay, sir," said Lieutenant Harvey Randolph, appearing in the companionway.

"Place this man in double irons, and keep him there until further orders; and, Randolph, I am going ashore for a short while, so leave you in command."

Ten minutes after Captain Ethan Norman was wending his way slowly up State street, Portland, his brow clouded, his lips firmly set; evidently his thoughts were none of the pleasantest.

CHAPTER V.

TRIED AND FOUND TRUE.

"MISS NORMAN, your father is in the parlor to see you."

It was one of the lady teachers of Madam Beaumont's fashionable school for young ladies, and the one addressed arose from her drawing, and smoothing back her gold-brown hair descended to the parlor.

In the six months that had passed since Estelle had left the humble cabin on the coast, she had greatly changed, and was rapidly developing into a beautiful woman.

Her face had lost its dark bronze hue, from exposure to the sun and wind, but it was even more lovely than before, and her rich dress was exceedingly becoming to her.

"Dear papa! I am so glad you have come. A party of us were going to surprise you by a visit to-morrow to see your new cruiser," and Estelle kissed her father affectionately, for she loved him dearly—though stern to others he was ever most kind and generous to her.

"I am sorry my vessel will not be here to-morrow, as I expect to sail this afternoon, Estelle; but, whether I do so or not, depends upon you."

"Upon me, papa?" asked the maiden in wonder.

"Yes, for I will, by your answers to some questions I desire to ask you, find out if all that I have heard is true or not."

Estelle saw that he was in earnest and seemed troubled, and her heart gave a throb of dread, but she said quietly:

"How can aught I have to say, papa, influence the movements of a government vessel?"

"I will tell you. I have heard that Captain Jasper Lucas was a smuggler."

Estelle's face changed color at once, but she asked in well-feigned surprise:

"A smuggler, sir?"

"Yes, that he is the leader of the desperate band known as the Coast Smugglers, and is now the commander of their new vessel, the Flyaway; is this true, my daughter?"

"Why, papa, how strangely you talk—asking me the truth or untruth of the movements of smugglers!"

"I ask you, Estelle—is Jasper Lucas a smuggler chief?"

"I sincerely hope not, dear father, for he was ever most kind to me, and I would dislike exceedingly to know he was such a wicked man as you report him to be."

"Estelle, you evade my questions as skillfully as a lawyer. Answer me now; was it Jasper Lucas who ran my vessel upon the sunken reef?"

"As I was not on the schooner, papa, what means had I of judging. All I remember, he met us when we landed—have you forgotten?"

"No; but it is said that he sprung into the sea and swam ashore."

"Why, papa, it is nearly a league from the cabin to the sunken reef!"

"True, but a good swimmer could make it, especially as there are islands for him to rest upon."

"The one who ran the schooner on the reef you said, I remember, had long hair and beard," said Estelle, thoughtfully.

"Yes, but he could cut that off; did you ever see Jasper Lucas wear long hair and beard?"

"Yes, sir, when I was a little girl, he wore long hair and beard."

"Estelle, you are incorrigible, but I will try again. Was Dick Lucas in command of the Flyaway the day she was burnt?"

"When I saw Dick he was on his way, at the risk of his life, to save you and your crew from death. Is it likely that he would save the lives of those who were hunting him down?"

"That is what puzzles me; but one direct question, Estelle."

"What is it, papa?"

"Do you know of one lawless act that either Lucas or his son ever committed?"

"Papa, I never saw my adopted father, or Dick, ever commit a crime—can I say more?"

"Estelle, I hoped that you would tell me frankly all you know about those men; but you will not, and in my heart I can not blame you for not wishing to betray those who saved your life and were kind to you."

"But, papa, as a girl, how would I be expected to know if Captain Jasper was as bad as you say you believe him to be?"

"True, it is not likely that you would know their secrets. Still, living as you did at the very head-quarters of the smugglers, there is much you could answer me if you would; but we will not discuss the matter longer, for I sail within the hour to attack their haunts," and Captain Norman gazed fixedly into the face of his daughter as he sent this shot home.

But not a muscle quivered as she said:

"If you take Captain Jasper and Dick, papa, I hope you will be certain of their guilt before you punish them."

"Never fear; I will. Now I must leave you, and I can not say how long I will be away."

After an affectionate farewell, Captain Norman left his daughter and returned on board his schooner, fully convinced that the man he had in irons had spoken the truth, and that Estelle would not betray those who had befriended her.

Half an hour after his arrival on board, the Vixen stood out of the harbor, and, standing in her room window, Estelle saw her flying seaward.

"Well, I was certainly under a hot fire, but I hope I said nothing to betray poor Captain Jasper and Dick. Now I must run the battery of madam's questions," and Estelle descended to the room of Madam Beaumont, who received her graciously, for she was not only a favorite but an heiress.

"You had a visit from your father, Estelle?"

"Yes, Madam Beaumont, and I find it will be necessary for me to leave school for a few days."

"Indeed! and where are you going, may I ask?"

"To attend to a matter of business upon which my father and myself had a conversation, Madam Beaumont, and which will admit of no delay, and I must leave on the Bath stage, this evening."

"And who is your escort, Estelle?"

"I believe that will be arranged, madam."

"Ah, yes, your father will attend to that;

well, I hate to give you up, even for a few days, but suppose I must. You have not long to get ready to catch the stage."

Glad to get away so easily, Estelle left the room, muttering:

"I would have gone had she refused me."

Half an hour after, with a small carpet-bag in her hand, she left the mansion and walked quickly toward the stage-office, where she bought her ticket, and was delighted to find that she would have but one fellow-passenger to watch her movements.

Arriving at Bath for an early breakfast, Estelle with unusual promptness in one so young, at once engaged a boat to run her up to Wiscasset, and throwing out a hint that it was a case of life and death she was bound on, the humble fisherman cracked on sail and the wind being fair, the passage was soon made.

Here, with only rest sufficient to get a meal, Estelle obtained a man to drive her to Rockland where she arrived just thirty-six hours after leaving Portland, and hastened at once to the shop of a Jew with whom she knew Captain Jasper had dealings.

"Well, mish, how can I serve you?" asked Abraham Levy, the disposer of smuggled goods.

"I see that you do not recognize me, Mr. Levy. I am Estelle, whom you met at the cabin of Captain Jasper several times, and I wish you to aid me to warn the captain of danger, as the Vixen has already sailed to attack his retreat."

"But how ish t'e Vixen to know—"

"We have no time to discuss that matter, Mr. Levy, but get for me at once a vessel to carry me to the home of Captain Jasper, or I may be too late!"

"But you ish a girl—"

"It matters not. Ah, I will go in the disguise of a boy. Have you a suit to fit me?"

"Yes, I ish got a suit, but it ish expensive."

"I care not for the cost. Give me the suit and boots and a hat—then, while I am changing my clothes, go and charter me a reliable man, and his vessel must be fast."

"I understand, I ish understand," said the Jew, and he ushered Estelle into an inner room and soon brought her a complete outfit that would disguise her thoroughly.

Coiling her hair upon the top of her head, she drew her hat on, and in a few moments was completely metamorphosed in pants, pea-jacket and boots.

"You ish make a peautiful poy, mish," said the Jew as she again entered the shop.

"Never mind my looks. Is the boat ready?"

"Yes, mish; I ish vill go mit you to the wharf. I have to pay him thirty dollars."

"Here is your money, and for the clothes too. I will soon return, I hope," and Estelle handed the Jew a roll of bills, for her father kept her most liberally supplied with money.

At the wharf she found a small, but trim-looking fishing-smack; with sail up, and the crew of two men on board.

"These gentlemen will take you all right, mish, I means, sir; I tolle 'em where they vas to go."

"Very good; cast off, lads!" said Estelle, as-

suming the style and tone she had used when living with the smugglers.

The breeze was blowing fresh, the little craft bent well to it, and dashed away with the speed of a bird, heading toward Mount Desert Island, and, with anxious face Estelle watched her course as she sped on, and then turned her eyes searchingly seaward, fearing to see the Vixen rushing along in pursuit of her game.

CHAPTER VI.

THE CHASE.

"As you is headin' for the retreat I s'pose you is all right, my lad," said one of the crew of the smack in which Estelle had taken passage.

"Certainly; why do you ask?" replied Estelle quickly.

"Because I see the Flyaway lying in the lee of Fox's Island."

"The Flyaway! Then head at once for it," cried Estelle joyfully, and the little craft went dancing along with the wind at her quarter.

"Yonder comes a schooner, my lad, as looks suspicious," said one of the men glancing astern, shortly after the course of the smack had been changed.

Instantly Estelle glanced back, took her glass from the carpet-sack she had brought with her, and her face became deadly pale, as she cried:

"It is the Vixen! Oh, can we not go faster?"

"I'll shake the other reef out, my lad, but it's risky."

"It is more risky to let that vessel overhaul us," cried Estelle, and the reef was at once shaken loose, and the little craft drove on with an increased velocity that threatened to run her under.

Then for a long time Estelle kept her eyes alternately fixed upon the Flyaway, lying so quietly in the island cove, and the Vixen, rushing on with a huge white bone in her teeth.

"They must be asleep on the Flyaway," said one of the men.

"Well, they is wakin' up now, you bet, shipmate, for see! they is dragging up her anchor," answered the other.

It was now evident that the schooner had been discovered from the Flyaway, for the sails were quickly spread, and the rakish little craft glided out of the cove.

Instantly Estelle sprung up in the bow and signaled the Flyaway, which bore down toward her, though it was bringing her closer to the oncoming schooner, now bowling along with every stitch of canvas drawing, for those on board saw their prey.

A few moments more, and the smack ran alongside of the Flyaway, and Estelle sprung on board, and was met by Dick Lucas, who started back with a cry of surprise and pleasure, for at a glance he recognized her.

"Hush, Dick, and do not betray me; but quickly come into the cabin with me," and she darted down the companionway.

Instantly he followed her; but waving him back as he would have embraced her, she said, hurriedly:

"Dick, one of your men has proven traitor, and I am confident is on board the schooner,

which is a new Vixen and commanded by my father."

"And you, Estelle?" asked the youth, sadly.

"Never mind me, but listen to what I have to say."

"Father endeavored to find out from me the truth, but I evaded all of his questions, and he left, saying he intended sailing at once to your secret haunts, for he knows all that you and your father are—smugglers. Oh, Dick, if you would only change your life of wickedness!" and Estelle seemed deeply moved.

"When I was with you I knew not how vile was the life you led, and you I do not blame so much, for your father made you what you are, Dick; but for Heaven's sake, cut adrift from this band who now have the name of—"

"Of what, Estelle?"

"Pirates."

"I know it, and for your sake I will lead a different life; now I must hasten away, for the schooner is creeping up dangerously near, and the men are getting impatient, I hear."

"But tell me first, how are your parents, Dick?"

"Both well, and father is at home with mother, while I came out to await the coming in of a vessel with smuggled goods; but, Estelle, I bless you for all that you have done to warn us. Now will you remain on board or—"

"No, I will leave at once in the smack and run inshore, thus making my way back to Portland. Farewell."

She offered her hand and he attempted to draw her to him.

"No, Dick, not as long as your name is linked with that of smuggler and—shall I say it—pirate, will I allow you to be aught to me. Farewell."

She bounded from the cabin, and without aid sprung into the smack, saying curtly:

"Cast off, and run for the land."

"About time if we expect to make it; and, as it is, we'll catch a shot or two," said one of the men, gruffly.

The next instant the two vessels swung apart, and the Flyaway headed up the coast, while the smack shaped her course in toward Penobscot Bay.

But, hardly had they separated when there came a white puff of smoke from the bows of the Vixen, now not more than half a league away, and a shot went flying over the heads of those in the smack.

"I told you so, youngster. Our necks will get stretched yet, or we'll get knocked into pieces."

"Stop prognosticating evil and attend to the sailing of the smack," shortly said the supposed youth, and not a muscle of his face changed as the schooner's shots now fell thick and fast around them.

"My heavens! is the schooner going to pursue us?" cried Estelle, as she saw the Vixen's bows suddenly changing their course.

But no; the schooner had larger game in view, and only swept around to give the smack a parting salute in the shape of a broadside.

One, two, three, four, five! the iron mouths sent forth their iron hail, and the shrieking missiles came hurtling on, some plowing up the

waves near, others flying above the topmast, one piercing the sail, and another hurling in a mangled heap the man who held the tiller, and dashing on through the stout hull.

Instantly Estelle sprung to the tiller, quickly brought the little craft back on her course and cried out sternly to the frightened comrade of the slain man:

"Quick! stuff your coat into that hole or we will go down."

The man saw their danger and sprung to obey, while he glanced nervously toward the Vixen as though expecting another broadside.

But the cutter, after seeing that her shots had not materially damaged the smack, stood on in pursuit of the Flyaway.

"What the deuce is the matter with the Flyaway?" suddenly asked the seaman of Estelle, as he saw that craft suddenly heading toward them.

"He is mad," cried Estelle; but, as she spoke, the Flyaway again went about and stood on her former course, for, when Dick Lucas had seen the Vixen pour a broadside upon the smack, he had formed a desperate determination to run down and grapple with the schooner, fearful as were the odds against him, that Estelle might escape.

But, when he discovered that the smack was not damaged, and, with his glass recognizing Estelle, as unhurt she sprung to the helm, he again put away in flight, hoping to draw the schooner on after him.

In this he was successful, for the Vixen spread on all sail again in chase of the Flyaway, while the smack, though leaking badly, headed back to Rockland; and two days after Estelle was welcomed back by Madam Beaumont, who asked, with considerable curiosity:

"Did you enjoy your visit, Miss Norman?"

"I cannot say that I did, Madam Beaumont, but I accomplished my object," answered Estelle significantly, as she glided by the madam and sought her room to sink, worn out, upon her bed, and with the cry upon her lips:

"I hope to Heaven he escaped!"

CHAPTER VII.

EVIL TIDINGS.

THREE days after her return from her romantic and daring errand, to warn Dick Lucas of danger, Estelle was awakened one morning by the deep booming of artillery.

Quickly she arose and sprung to the window of her room which overlooked the harbor, and the sight she saw caused her head to droop into her hands, and the cry to spring to her lips:

"Oh, God! have mercy upon them!—have mercy upon them!"

Again, after a moment, as the roar of the guns continued, she raised her head and glanced forth.

There, sailing bravely up the harbor, was the Vixen, and her guns were answering the salute offered by the fort, for in her wake came the famous smuggling craft, the Flyaway.

"Is he dead, or a prisoner, I wonder? If dead, it were better," murmured Estelle, "for he will be condemned to die an ignominious death—and

poor Captain Jasper, and that dear, sad-eyed woman who ever was as a mother to me—what is their fate?

"Ah me! ah me! my poor heart will break!" and throwing herself upon her bed the poor girl burst into a torrent of weeping.

At length she arose and dressed herself, and pleading illness, asked the servant to show her father up to her room should he call, and she felt that he would.

"I am glad that madam left yesterday for Boston, for she might speak of my trip away, were she here—still, if accused of it, I would not deny it," she murmured, and seating herself by the open window, she gazed sadly down upon the rakish little Flyaway, lying so calmly at anchor, with the stars and stripes at the mast-head.

Presently a heavy step was heard in the hall and a knock upon the door followed.

"Come in," she said shortly, and her father, in full uniform, but looking pale and fatigued, entered.

"Estelle, my daughter, I fear I have sad tidings for you," he said sadly, drawing her down beside him on the sofa.

"I am ready to hear all, sir," she said, coldly.

"You know that I went to attack the retreats of the Coast Smugglers?"

"You told me such was your intention, sir, when you departed."

"Well, I was successful, for I captured the Flyaway."

"And her crew, sir?"

"Some of them escaped by boldly springing overboard, and others were killed and a number wounded, who fell into our hands with the vessel."

"Will you not give me an account of your victory, sir?" asked Estelle, while her heart bounded with hope that Dick had been among those who escaped.

"Certainly. I sighted the Flyaway near Fox Island, and alongside of her was a fishing-smack.

"I gave chase, but the smack was a nimble sailer, and escaped my shots, so I stood on after the Flyaway, which was maneuvering in a most peculiar manner, for I believed twice that he intended fighting me.

"It was a hot chase, for the smuggler sailed like a witch, and I lost him as night came on; but I sailed at once for the rendezvous, the same place where you once lived; and under the guidance of one of the smugglers, who had proved a traitor, I headed in toward the cliff just before daylight, four days ago.

"Then, to my surprise, I saw the Flyaway, standing rapidly out of the harbor, her decks crowded with men.

"Instantly I poured a broadside upon her, which cut away her bowsprit, and brought her to, and the next moment I laid her aboard.

"But her crew fought like devils, and only after a most desperate resistance did they cry for quarter."

"Then you captured them all, sir?"

"No, for half a dozen of them jumped into the sea and disappeared, and among them the commander of the Flyaway, who was none other than Dick Lucas."

Estelle groaned and dropped her head in her hands.

"I recognized him by the flash of the firearms, and he fought like a tiger, though I am confident he was wounded more than twice."

"Once we crossed swords, and the young devil disarmed me and spared my life."

"That was noble in him, as you were seeking his. I am glad he is not lost to all true manhood," said Estelle, without raising her head from her hand.

"For that I thank him; but his resistance will cost him his life at the yard-arm for nearly a dozen of my men were slain; yet, for his own sake I hope, and I believe, that he is dead, as it was taking desperate chances to reach the shore, especially as he was wounded."

"And Captain Jasper and his wife?" asked Estelle, her head still bowed.

"He is a prisoner on board the schooner, and can meet but one fate, though I feel deeply for him."

"After capturing the Flyaway I landed with a party under the cliff, and there we again met with resistance from a score of men, headed by Captain Jasper.

"But we drove them back to the cabin of their leader, and after a short struggle they surrendered, and, to my great distress, I learned that a most unfortunate accident had occurred, for poor Mrs. Lucas had fallen—"

"Dead! that dear old woman dead, father?" and Estelle sprung to her feet.

"A stray shot pierced her heart."

"Oh, father! what have you done?"

"Estelle, for God's sake be calm. It was one of the accidents of battle, and I could not know that she would be slain."

"Poor old woman; but I believe it is better so, for, had she lived, she would have had to mourn her husband, slain by an ignominious death, and perhaps her son as dead. It is better so, father, but oh, it is so cruel, to listen to sorrow and death having come upon those I loved so dearly, and by the hand of my own father, who owes to them the life of his daughter, and the burial of his wife, my mother," and again Estelle sunk down in a perfect abandon of grief, which her father made no effort to interrupt.

At length she asked, as clearly as she could:

"You buried her, father?"

"Yes, near where your mother lies, and her husband seems utterly crushed with grief, and, from my heart I pity him, for I do not believe him at heart a bad man."

"After capturing all the booty, which the smugglers had stored away in caves, we set sail for Portland, bringing the Flyaway along."

"And Captain Jasper is now on board the schooner in irons?"

"Yes."

"Can I see him, father?"

"It will do no good; but, on the contrary only be a greater grief to you."

"He is wretched and in trouble, and I would see him, sir."

"Then you may, as you so wish it. You can get ready and return with me on board the schooner; but, Estelle, I beg of you to control yourself, for none here know of your having once been among smugglers, and I hope that you

will not forget yourself so far as to betray that which I wish to remain a secret."

"I have no desire, father, to have my name connected with outlaws, still I can but feel deeply for those who cared for me for eight long years, and when I learned to love dearly, smugglers, ay, pirates though you have proven them," said Estelle, proudly, and she threw on her hat and cloak, and in company with her father wended her way down to the landing, off which the Vixen lay at anchor.

CHAPTER VIII.

ESTELLE RECEIVES A VISITOR.

"I HAVE orders to carry you to the cabin," said the guard, bending over the form of a man crouching down upon the lower deck, and with his face covered by his manacled hands.

But the prisoner never moved, nor did he seem to hear the guard.

"I say, Sir Pirate, I have orders to take you into the cabin, where I guess you'll find that you've got to swing for your crimes," said the guard again, and he shook the prisoner rudely by the shoulder.

The man looked up at this, and revealed the white, haggard face of Jasper Lucas.

With an effort he arose to his feet, and, gathering up his chains, walked along painfully and slowly with the guard, while his fellow prisoners looked after him pityingly, for they forgot their sorrows in his greater anguish.

Estelle paced to and fro the elegant cabin of the Vixen, her lips set, her eyes restless, and she started visibly as the clanking of chains came to her ears.

Presently the companionway was darkened and the guard and his prisoner entered.

"Leave the prisoner with me, sir," said Estelle imperiously.

"I have orders, miss—"

"I am Miss Norman, sir; did you hear my command?" and the flashing eyes caused the guard to shrink away.

Like one in a dream stood Jasper Lucas, until the small hand of Estelle took his arm and led him to a seat.

"My poor, poor friend; I asked to see you that I might tell you how I feel for you in your sorrow."

"Estelle, my little Estelle, it has come at last upon me, and the blow is a bitter one indeed," the strong man sunk down upon a seat.

"It is a bitter blow indeed, for poor mamma Lucas has gone."

"Yes, child, they killed her. I meant not to be a bad man, but I became acquainted with lawless arts upon the coast, and gradually drifted into the leadership of the band, though she urged me against it time and again.

"Now she is gone, and poor Dick, my noble boy, is dead—"

"No, no; he is not dead—he escaped," said Estelle, eagerly.

"Do you know that he did, my child?"

"Alas, no, it is only hope; but he was a splendid swimmer and—"

"The men tell me, Estelle, that he was several times wounded and he could not reach the shore weakened with the loss of blood."

"Perhaps his men, those who sprung overboard with him, aided him?" suggested Estelle.

"No; I feel that he is dead, and I do not care how soon my death follows, only I would not die as a pirate."

"Nor shall you; I will aid you to escape," said Estelle, in a whisper.

"And what have I to live for after I escape? No, my child; life has not a single charm for me now, and I wish to die—only not at the yard-arm."

"Live to find your boy—live to change your life, and with him be happy before you die."

"No, I care not to nurse such a hope for I know it is useless; do not tempt me, Estelle."

"But I will; money will buy your liberty. I will bribe your guard and—"

"I will not go, I tell you, child; but beg them to shoot and not to hang me—do that much for your old adopted father and I will bless you."

"I will do all that I can for you. Now I hear my father coming."

The next instant Captain Norman entered the cabin.

"Estelle, Midshipman Wainright will see you back to your school, as now I have a meeting of the officers regarding the fate of the prisoners."

"I am ready, sir. My dear old friend, farewell," and clasping the hand of Jasper Lucas, Estelle left the cabin; and under the escort of the handsome young middy wended her way back to the home of Madam Beaumont.

Several days after Captain Norman again called upon his daughter, and Estelle learned that the prisoner had been tried and sentenced.

"And what is their fate to be?" quickly asked Estelle.

"Their leader, Jasper Lucas, is to be hung as a pirate, at the yard-arm of the Vixen, and his followers are all to be sent to prison for life."

"I do not know which is the most to be dreaded, sir; but when does the execution take place?"

"In ten days from to-day. Until then the pirates will be kept in irons aboard the schooner."

"Father, can nothing be done to save that old man?" earnestly asked Estelle.

"Nothing; he has been for years the leader of a band of desperate men who have often taken life in that wicked calling, and did he not run my vessel upon a reef and thereby destroy the lives of half a dozen men, besides risking mine, and the remainder of my crew?"

"Of late, emboldened by the loss of the schooner, he has become almost a pirate, and, in resisting me at his cabin, took the lives of several of my men, so he deserves death, though, after all he has been to you, Estelle, I can but feel for him, yet I cannot save him."

"So be it, sir; I will not ask it again at your hands; but I hate to see him hung like a dog, and hope he can at least meet his death by being shot."

"No; he is sentenced to be hung at the yard-arm, and I cannot alter the decree of the court," and Captain Norman left his daughter's presence, with real sympathy for her in the sorrow she must feel at the fearful fate to be visited

upon the man who had been to her all that a fond father could be.

Though feeling the utmost sorrow for the death of Mrs. Lucas, the deepest commiseration for the fate of Jasper Lucas, and a painful suspense as to whether Dick was dead or alive, Estelle, with a strength that was wonderful, concealed her feelings from not only her schoolmates, but even the watchful eyes of Madam Beaumont, who attributed her paleness to the anxiety she had upon her father's account.

One day, the second before the one appointed for the sentence to be carried out regarding the prisoners, the servant of Madam Beaumont's establishment informed Estelle that there was a visitor to see her in the parlor.

"Who is it, Nancy?"

"I don't know, miss, only that she's an old woman."

Wondering who it could be, Estelle descended to the parlor, and an old lady with bowed form and white hair advanced to meet her.

"You don't know me, my dear," she said in a squeaking voice, "but I've known you ever since you was a little girl, and I've come to see you upon a matter of private business. Could I see you alone?" and the old woman nodded her head toward the other visitors in the parlor.

"Yes, madam, come with me to my room and allow me to assist you," said the maiden, kindly.

"No, I thank ye, I guess I can get along better alone, as my gait is a peculiar one," and the old woman hobbled on after Estelle, and with great effort got up-stairs.

"Now be seated, madam, and tell me how I can serve you?" and Estelle drew an easy-chair up to the window.

"We are all alone?"

"Yes—the door leads into a schoolmate's room, but is locked."

"Please lock that door also," and the old woman nodded toward the one by which they had entered the chamber.

Quietly Estelle stepped forward and turned the key in the lock. As she turned once more to her visitor, she saw that the bent form had risen to its full height, the large spectacles had been removed, the sunbonnet thrown back, and then in spite of the gray hair and wrinkles painted upon the face she recognized Dick Lucas.

"Dick, oh Dick!"

And she sprung toward him, but, checking herself suddenly, she continued:

"I am so glad that you escaped death!"

"Yes, I escaped death to know that my poor mother was dead and my father doomed to be hung as a pirate," bitterly said the youth.

"Alas, I know all, and I feel more deeply for you, Dick, than any one else can; but tell me of yourself—you were wounded?"

"Yes, but not seriously, and I am recovering, and forget my sufferings in the fate that hangs over my poor father."

"I am plotting to save him, Dick."

"You! brave, noble Estelle," and he made a step toward her, but she shrunk back.

"Yes, I went on board the schooner to see him, and he felt that he would have to die; but, believing that you were dead, he refused every offer I made him to escape."

"But he must escape, and I have sought you to aid me."

"I have already enlisted a friend in my cause—a young middy, who will bribe the guard to allow your father to escape, and desert with him, the night before the day appointed for his execution."

"Bless you, Estelle!"

"Do not thank me, Dick, for I owe to your father all that I can do for him; but alas! that I should have to mourn for both you and him as I do."

"Estelle, I could not help doing as I did. I ran to the rendezvous, warned my father, and tried to get out to sea before the Vixen arrived; but I could not, and we were compelled to defend ourselves, and thrice I struck up weapons aimed at your father's life."

"When my crew at last cried for quarter I sprung into the sea, as did a number of my men, and swam ashore, where I arrived to find my home in ashes, my mother dead and my father a prisoner."

"Fainting from loss of blood, my men took me in a small boat down the coast, and in a fisherman's hut I lay until able to come here to endeavor to save my father and his men."

"Your father, I believe, we can save; but to attempt to assist the men to escape would be madness," said Estelle.

"Perhaps; but Estelle, it is rumored that the schooner has to go to sea, and the prisoners are to be sent ashore to-night, and the execution is to take place at the city jail."

"Oh, Dick! then what can we do to save your poor father?" cried Estelle, in alarm.

"You have the right to go on the schooner," so do so, please, and see if you can find out just when the prisoners are to be taken on shore, and send me word by a messenger to the Sailor's Inn. Simply tell the messenger to ask for the landlord and make known to him the hour, and leave the rest to me."

"Oh, Dick, I hear my father's voice downstairs; we are lost."

"Oh, no; unlock the door and keep calm," coolly said Dick, and hastily resuming his disguise, he took his seat by the window, just as a knock came upon the door.

"Come in, papa, I heard your voice," and Estelle kissed her father affectionately, and, having regained her presence of mind, said, calmly:

"Mrs. Richards, this is my father, Captain Ethan Norman."

"Lor'! you don't say so, my dear. Glad to meet you, sir, I am, indeed, for you've lately done your country great service," and the supposed old lady attempted to rise.

"Keep your seat, my dear lady," and Captain Norman shook hands warmly with Mrs. Richards, whose compliment quite won his heart.

"You see, I'm the grandma o' one o' yer daughter's friends, sir, who's been suffering of late, and I just dropped in to see Miss Estelle, to have a little talk, and congratulate her upon the great victory her father had won over the bloody pirates; but you looks mighty young and handsome, sir, to be the father of such a big girl."

Captain Norman again bowed to the complimentary old lady, who continued:

"And when are the pirates to be hung, captain?"

"Their leader, Captain Lucas, is to be hung day after to-morrow, madam, and the remainder go to prison for life."

"Ah! and he's to be hung on board your vessel, I hear tell."

"He was to have been; but I have orders to go to sea to-morrow, and the prisoners will be removed to-night to the town jail, where the execution will take place at the appointed time."

"You must be glad you won't have to witness the hanging, sir?"

"No, the man deserved his fate."

"Yes, yes; but you men in the navy and army get so hard-hearted; but it's human nature, I suppose; and so the prisoners are to come ashore in the morning, you say?"

"No, madam, at midnight, to avoid the crowd; but I suppose I should not have mentioned the hour, and beg you not to speak of it."

"Oh, no, sir; but I thank you, sir, and I'm glad to have met the 'hero of the sea,' as folks is calling you now. Good-by, sir—good-by, Miss Estelle—I'll tell my girl you sent your love," and the supposed old woman arose with the greatest seeming difficulty from her chair, and refusing the aid of Captain Norman hobbled to the door.

"Excuse me a moment, father; I will see Mrs. Richards down-stairs," said Estelle, and once in the hall, she continued:

"Oh, Dick, the fearful risk you run! For my sake go far from here."

"For your sake I will not; but you need not go on the schooner now, as I know the hour, Estelle. Leave all to me. Farewell."

Pressing her hand, Dick motioned for her to return to her room, while he slowly wended his way down-stairs and out of the house.

CHAPTER IX.

TAKING DESPERATE CHANCES.

As he expected to sail the following day, Captain Norman passed the entire afternoon with his daughter, who, when alone with her father, made little effort to conceal her grief at the coming fate of Jasper Lucas.

At length Captain Norman bade Estelle farewell, telling her he knew not exactly how long he would be absent, as he had orders to cruise along the coast as far north as Passan...nody Bay.

When he reached the schooner darkness had settled upon the sea, and the lights of the town sparkled like myriads of glow-worms.

"Any thing new, Randolph?" he asked his lieutenant who met him at the gangway.

"Nothing, sir; I have ordered the boats in readiness to convey the prisoners ashore at midnight."

"You did right; we will sail after the morning stage arrives from Boston, which will be just after breakfast; I expect more orders by that mail," and Captain Norman descended into his cabin, and after a hearty supper threw himself down to rest upon the sofa.

After a fragrant cigar he dozed off to sleep, from which he was awakened by the arrival of

a messenger from shore with instructions from Boston.

They were from the commodore in charge there, and hastily glancing at the contents, he gave an order to Lieutenant Randolph, and settled back in the cushions to continue his interrupted nap.

But again he was suddenly awakened by a loud commanding voice on deck; a wild yell followed, and as Captain Norman rushed on deck, he met his lieutenant coming toward him.

"What has happened, Randolph?"

"Yonder little yacht, sir, ran aboard the boat carrying the prisoners ashore and has rescued them."

"The deuce! Up with the anchor and spread sail in chase! Thank Heaven! the order came to keep the leader aboard and hang him from the yard as an example: Lively, lads, lively!" yelled Captain Norman, and the crew of the schooner sprung to their work with a will.

But the anchors lay deep in the mud, the sails were close furled, and it was some moments before the schooner could get under way, while the swift yacht that had so daringly rescued the prisoners, was flying away with every stitch of canvas set.

As the schooner swung clear, the boat returned, and the officer in charge hastily made his report.

He had seen the yacht anchored up the harbor, with sails spread, and remarked upon the recklessness of her commander, with the stiff wind blowing; then, as his boat got half-way to the shore he discovered the yacht bearing swiftly down upon him, and ere he was aware, it was almost upon them, and luffing quickly up, several men jumped into his boat, and it was drawn alongside, and in an instant the prisoners were dragged on board the vessel.

A moment after his boat was cast loose, and the yacht was flying on down the harbor; but so sudden had been the attack that the oarsmen had not time to get their muskets ready for use, and could only send a few shots after the daring craft that had robbed him of his prisoners.

"Curse him! That boy was not drowned. It was his work; but by the Lord above, he shall see his father hung. Mr. Randolph, have Jasper Lucas brought on deck," cried Captain Norman, now white with rage.

The schooner's head had now swung round, her sails were bellying out with the stiff breeze, and she began to move on in pursuit of the yacht, now a mile away.

"Signal the for, Mr. Randolph; to fire on that craft!"

"Ay, ay, sir."

"Ho! those forward guns!" shouted the infuriated captain.

"Ay, ay, sir," answered the officer in charge.

"Blaze away at yonder yacht."

Boom! boom! went the guns, awakening the whole town from slumber, and a moment after the fort opened and the roar of artillery became incessant, as the shots were sent after the daring little craft."

"Now swing that pirate up! He, at least, shall not escape!" said Captain Norman, and up into the air, with no cry for mercy upon his lips, went Jasper Lucas, while the glare of the flaring

guns showed his swaying form distinctly to hundreds of eyes gazing upon the weird scene from the shore, and the glaring orbs of Dick Lucas and those on the yacht.

But though the youth turned livid at the sight, he suppressed a groan, and registered in his heart a vow of vengeance for his father's death, while he firmly clinched the tiller and held the fleet little craft upon her course, avoiding the fort by not running out the main entrance to the harbor, but standing away among the islands, where he knew the depth of the cruiser would not allow her to follow his light-draught vessel.

And Estelle, from her window she, too, saw the flight and chase—the ghastly form in the rigging, and she watched the little vessel until it disappeared in the distance, and then sunk down upon her knees, crying:

"It was poor old Jasper. My God! what has my father done?"

And there she remained until the sun arose, and once more she gazed from her window.

The scene was now one of calm. The Vixen lay quietly at her anchor; but far off down the island-dotted bay she saw a sail which she recognized as the Flyaway, which, being of lighter draught, had been sent in pursuit, while, as soon as he received his instructions by the Boston stage, Captain Norman intended standing out to sea, and joining again in the chase.

From the rigging the ghastly form had been removed. Harvey Randolph paced to and fro upon the quarter-deck, and the scene of terrible excitement had passed away.

But the city was early astir and the morning paper was full of the daring escape of the pirates, whose confederates in crime had boldly seized a yacht belonging to one of Portland's wealthiest citizens, to carry out their desperate rescue.

Then the conduct of Captain Norman was commented upon and he was praised for having so promptly swung up the ringleader of the freebooters.

All this was read and reread to poor Estelle, by both the madam and the pupils, and her father highly praised, for little they knew the deep interest the maiden felt in all that had passed under cover of the darkness.

With the arrival of the mail the white sails of the Vixen were again spread to the breeze, and the beautiful vessel dashed swiftly out of the harbor toward the open sea, followed by the good wishes of the citizens, who congratulated themselves upon having so distinguished an officer as Captain Norman to watch over the interests of the people, and hoping that he would soon return, with the pirates again prisoners.

And Estelle watched her father's vessel as long as she could see it, and then said fervently:

"Pray Heaven those two never meet again, for my father's act I fear has aroused poor Dick beyond endurance."

"Poor child," said madam, entering her room, "you are worried about your father, and I do not wonder at it; but come, you need not study for a few days, and you will feel better."

But madam knew not how deep-seated was the sorrow of her beautiful pupil.

CHAPTER X.

THE SCENE ON THE BLUFF.

Two years have passed away, since the execution of Jasper Lucas, and the daring rescuer of the score of smugglers who had been sentenced to a life-long imprisonment; but, instead of having broken up the band of outlaws, by the hanging of their chief, they had become worse than ever before, and under a new chief had won the unenviable title of the Curse of the Coast.

Who that leader really was few seemed to know, for some said he was an old man with long, white beard, and others reported him to be a mere boy; but, both Captain Norman and one other felt certain that they knew who he was.

And that other was Estelle Norman, who, at seventeen was the belle of Portland, having turned the heads and broken the hearts of all the young gallants in town, without, seemingly, having been injured herself by the arrows of the little mischievous god Cupid.

That the daring leader of the smugglers was none other than Dick Lucas, Estelle felt assured, though not a word had reached her of the youth since his flight in the yacht that night of his father's death.

Nor had the little yacht been heard from, and many of the good people were wont to say that Providence had sent her to the bottom with all on board.

After returning from his cruise after the fugitive craft, Captain Norman had organized a party, and, accompanied by a fleet of small vessels, had gone along the coast from the Isle of Shoals to the St. Croix river, and visited every known haunt of smugglers, under the guidance of the traitor, Jerome Lucas, the half brother of Captain Jasper.

As a number of haunts had been destroyed in this expedition, several scores of suspected men captured, and a dozen or more small vessels taken, it was believed that smuggling had received its death-blow along the coast of Maine, and honest traders held a jubilee.

But, it was not a month after, that a suspicious craft was reported off the coast, and ere long it became well known that the smugglers were at their same old tricks, and Captain Norman kept the Vixen constantly on the go from point to point.

Occasionally he would make a slight capture of smuggled goods, but the outlaw vessel and her daring commander kept out of his clutches, though perpetrating acts of outlawry at times within reach of the Vixen's guns, until the crew began to believe that they were constantly cruising after a specter craft.

One day the Vixen took a run up the coast, and not expecting to find the enemy, though in search of him, Captain Norman invited Estelle and several of her young friends to go along as guests on board the schooner, an invitation they most gladly accepted.

When half a day out from Portland they sighted a brig running in with the flag at half-mast and the Union down.

"It is the packet brig from Portland to Halifax, and commanded by that imp of sin, Jerome Lucas," said Captain Norman, looking at the coming vessel through the glass.

"Yes, sir, I remember he purchased a vessel, shortly after leading us on the expedition against the smugglers. I wonder what can be the matter with his vessel, now?" answered Harvey Randolph, who had of late been an ardent suitor for the hand of Estelle Norman.

"We shall soon know. Luff, helmsman, and we'll hail him. Ahoy the brig!" shouted Captain Norman, as the two vessels approached within hailing distance.

"Ho, the Vixen," came the answer.

"What is the matter on board?"

"We were boarded by a pirate who took our captain from us and we put back."

"Ha! describe the pirate."

"It was the schooner known as the Flyaway."

"Dick Lucas as I live," muttered Captain Norman, and aloud he called out:

"Which course did he steer?"

"He stood in toward the land, as though running for the mouth of the Kennebec."

"How armed?"

"A pivot-gun fore and aft—they looked like thirty-twos, and two small guns to a broadside, with a crew of fifty men."

"The devil! the fellow is strong enough to give us a fight, and a good one; but he'll run as soon as he hears the bark of our iron dogs," and thanking the mate of the brig for his information, Captain Norman ordered the quartermaster to put the schooner away for the Kennebec.

Upon the deck were Estelle and her young friends. All had been attentive listeners to the conversation that had occurred, and the faces of some of the fair girls blanched at the name of pirate; but Estelle quietly crossed over to her father and asked in a low tone:

"Papa, was not Jerome Lucas the half-brother of Captain Jasper, and the half-uncle of Dick Lucas?"

"Yes."

"Then Dick Lucas has captured him, knowing his treachery to his father and the smuggler band."

"You speak as though you knew the motives of the young pirate well, Estelle?" said the captain suspiciously.

"I know his nature, and though he has many noble traits, Dick Lucas is not one to forget or forgive a deadly injury, father."

In spite of his nerve Captain Norman turned a shade paler, for the capture of Jerome Lucas made him feel as though the young smuggler might one day seek vengeance against himself.

It was toward evening that the Vixen stood in toward the coast, and, with just sail enough to keep her under control, and by casting the lead ahead, began to feel her way in toward the land, at the point where a high bluff projected out into the sea.

"I don't exactly like this place in here, Randolph, without a pilot; but if it comes on to blow from seaward we can seek an anchorage under the lee of some of these islands," said Captain Norman, as the schooner crept in nearer and nearer to the shore.

Standing upon the bluff, and in the shadow of a rugged pine, was a man, gazing attentively down upon the deck of the incoming craft.

His face had grown darker, sterner, and more

manly in the two years that had passed since the reader last beheld Dick Lucas; but there was yet the same fearless flash to his bright eyes, and firm resolve upon his handsome mouth.

His form had become more compact, and he stood six feet now, with massive shoulders, and every indication of great strength and activity, while his every motion was graceful and full of dignity.

Dressed in a pair of white duck pants, low shoes, a sailor cap and blue jacket, trimmed with gold lace, and wearing a red sash in which were stuck a pair of pistols and a knife with jeweled hilt, he was indeed a handsome, dashing-looking man—the very one to dare any deed, and to make captive the heart of any romantic woman, for away back in his eyes dwelt a dreamy sadness that was intensely fascinating.

In a cove near by, and wholly concealed from a seaward view, lay a saucy little schooner that looked as though bent on mischief, and a number of men were busy, hauling up from the deck to a shelf of rock, back of which was a cavern, a quantity of bales and boxes.

Silently did Dick Lucas stand on the bluff, and watch the coming in of the cruiser, and his lips curled as he muttered:

"Fool! He is running his head into the lion's mouth."

Still watching the schooner he saw it come to anchor, furl its sails, and make all ship-shape for the night.

"Now is my time. Ethan Norman, your days are numbered, by Heaven! but I'll foreshadow your fate by hanging the wretch whom I took from the brig, and who betrayed my poor father to his death."

Placing a whistle to his lips, he gave a shrill call, and it was heard on board the Vixen, and every eye turned toward the distant bluff, and beheld the tall, solitary form standing there.

The next instant they saw a man approach, salute and depart, and soon after a crowd came, and in their midst was a prisoner, bound hand and foot.

"Who are they, and what are they doing?" asked Captain Norman, somewhat anxiously.

As he spoke, a wild shriek came across the waters, and up over the head of the group of men, arose a form in the air, struggling violently.

Higher, higher he went, until he was drawn half-way up to the limb, over which hung the rope that supported him, and the other end of which was held by his executioners.

With folded arms, and eyes glancing at the hanging man an instant, and the next upon the schooner's deck, stood Dick Lucas, and Captain Norman lowered his glass and looked toward Estelle.

She was very pale, and said, softly:

"Father, do you recognize the executioner?"

"Yes."

"And the man he has had hung?"

"Yes."

"Is it not fearful?" and the maiden turned away, while the crew, in superstitious dread at the scene on the bluff, knew not what to say or to do.

"We can give him no aid, Randolph," said Captain Norman, hopelessly.

"None, sir; we can only retaliate when we capture him, and I believe his vessel is in yonder basin," answered the lieutenant.

"So I believe, too. Well, she cannot run by us and get to sea, and to-morrow we will search for her and take her in the boats."

"It would be better, sir, I think, to attack her with the boats, for then we would avoid an action on our own decks, which would be unfortunate with our fair guests on board."

"True; how strange it is that we should have, by accident, dropped anchor so near the pirate, and been witnesses of the execution of Jerome Lucas, which was done in bravado, I am certain, to frighten us off; but here we will remain, Randolph."

Yet, in spite of his brave words, Ethan Norman felt a dread of coming evil at his heart, and descending into the brightly illuminated cabin, endeavored to drive unpleasant thoughts away by mingling in pleasant conversation with his guests; but, all had witnessed the execution on the bluff, and a shadow seemed to have fallen upon the entire party, usually so gay and happy.

CHAPTER XI.

DICK DEAD-EYE.

In a comparatively safe harborage, under the lee of a crescent-shaped island, and with a bold cliff astern of her, lay the Vixen, and, upon the bluff of the mainland stood a solitary form, gazing down upon her.

"No, it must not be, it must not be," he muttered; and with clouded brow and set lips he stood looking down upon the beautiful vessel, while around him crept the shadows of night, and soon shut out the vessel and sea from view, only a twinkling light, looking like a star, showing where the vessel lay upon the waters.

Until a late hour, and after all others had sought rest except the watch on duty, Estelle paced the deck with her father, who was urging upon her to accept the heart and hand of his favorite officer, Lieutenant Randolph, who dearly loved the fair girl.

Suddenly, as they turned in their walk at the stern of the vessel, a head and shoulders appeared above the bulwarks, and then the form of a man stood before them.

Instantly they started back, but the man said quickly, in a deep, stern voice:

"Hold! be still as death! I mean you no harm."

"Who are you, and why are you here?" asked the naval officer, quickly, while Estelle shrank away, as if in fear of the strange visitor.

"I am here to serve you. Who I am it matters not, so that I serve the purpose for which I came," was the calm reply in the same deep tones.

"How did you come on board?"

"My canoe lies under the stern of your vessel."

"Ha! are you alone?" asked the captain quickly.

"Yes, I have taken no one into confidence, for if my coming here was known it would cost me my life."

"Again I ask you—who are you?"

"A smuggler!"

"By Heaven! I thought as much. You have come to betray your comrades and need gold."

"In part you are right; I have come to betray my comrades, but in so doing I serve you, and gold I do not care for."

"A marvel indeed you are—an avowed smuggler, a man who would betray your comrades and yet not for gold. You wish revenge, doubtless," sneered the officer.

"No, I have come to serve you, but not by leading you to the haunts of my comrades, for I am not so base as that, but to prevent their seizing your ship."

"By the Lord Harry, but now you are showing your hand—come, I would see that face," and Captain Norman moved toward the man, who said bitterly:

"My face, like my form, you will find deformed," and he stepped where the light of the companionway fell full upon him.

He was a tall man, yet stooped badly, and upon his shoulders was a hump that disfigured him; his hair was long and black, and his complexion was of a livid hue, while a dark growth of beard concealed the lower part of his face and mouth.

But the strangest of all was that one of his eyes was peculiarly deformed; it had a dead, straight stare, and never moved in its socket, while it was overhung by heavy brows.

Altogether he was a remarkable looking man, and certainly was repulsive to gaze upon.

"You are not a beauty, that is certain, and if your tongue is as crooked as your eye and form, I will find it hard to believe you," said Captain Norman unfeelingly.

"Though a poor deformed wretch, I have not a bad heart, and I repeat it—I have come here to serve you," said the man in a low tone, while Estelle remarked quickly:

"Father, you have hurt him by your words; it was unkind of you."

"Why do you wish to serve me?" asked the captain, after an instant of thought.

"Not on *your* account, I assure you," was the quick retort.

"Why then, fellow?" asked the officer, angered at the reply.

"On account of your beautiful and noble daughter. I would not have harm fall upon her, or have her grieve for her father slain."

"You are a strange man; tell me what danger threatens me," said Captain Norman, evidently influenced by the words and manner of his remarkable visitor.

"Do you see yonder high bluff?" and the man turned and pointed landward.

"Yes, it is darkly outlined against the sky."

"Well, under its shadow are a number of desperate men preparing to attack your vessel."

"A few wild smugglers, who by to-morrow night will be in my power," said Captain Norman, haughtily.

"You are mistaken; there are four-score brave men yonder; they will come and attack you in six boats, from as many different points, and just before the break of day; if driven off, yonder bluff has four cannon mounted upon it, and this island ahead of you has four, all of which will be manned and command your ves-

sel, making a fearful gantlet to run through. No, Captain Norman, you are in great danger; you have your daughter and your friends on board, and it has been determined by the Coast Smugglers either to capture your vessel or sink her at her anchorage."

There was something in the deep voice and the manner of the speaker that impressed his listeners deeply; but, casting off all sign of dread, Captain Norman responded, calmly:

"This is a nice story you tell, sir. I suppose you wish to frighten me off from attempting to capture your smuggler craft, the Flyaway, tomorrow?"

"No, such is not my intention, captain: I wish to warn you that your days are numbered if you do not stand at once out to sea, and I urge it for the sake of your daughter."

"Your advice I will not take, for I believe you are sent to get me out of the way, so that the Flyaway can escape."

"Captain Norman, it will be three hours before the attack will be made. Do you hear that moaning sound? Well, it is the sea, and there will be a storm, and although you apparently are in a safe anchorage, there is not a more dangerous one on this coast."

"Can I believe you?" asked the officer, anxiously.

"Yes. Why, look for yourself—see yonder bluff, like a wall of rock, and yonder island-points, you doubtless noticed in the light of day, were ragged reefs; well, the sea, when a storm breaks on this coast, rushes around those points like a mill-race, strikes the solid cliff and rebounds with a force that will wreck any craft that has sought shelter here."

"By Jupiter! I believe you are right, and a storm is certainly coming up, though yet a long way off; but, how am I to leave here, as I cannot go out at night without a pilot?"

"I came on board this vessel, sir, to pilot her out to sea, well knowing that if she beat off the smugglers, or run the gantlet of the guns, she would go down in the storm."

"And yet you say you ask me no price for this service?"

"Oh, yes! I have a price," replied the stranger.

"Name it, that I might see how high your ambition runs."

"It is that you give me a berth aboard this vessel as quartermaster."

"That is a small price; but, how can I know if you have spoken the truth?"

"If you remain here you will soon find out—But hold! if you care not to go yourself, send one of your officers, and I will row him to the island batteries, and then carry him to the bluff and show him that the guns mounted there could sink this vessel in ten minutes—nay more, I will show him the smugglers now lying in waiting for the signal to attack."

"You certainly speak most fair, but if I doubt you, you have only yourself to blame as an outlaw; but I will accept your offer. Estelle, ask Midshipman Wainright to come here."

Estelle walked forward, and the young officer, whose watch it was on deck, soon approached his captain.

"Mr. Wainright, go with this man, and re-

port to me upon your return all that he has shown you."

"Ay, ay, sir," said the midshipman, looking at the stranger with surprise.

"Come," simply said the man, and he stepped over the bulwark and dropped nimbly down into a small boat lying under the stern of the schooner.

The midshipman silently followed, and the little boat was paddled noiselessly away and was soon lost to view in the darkness.

"Father, what do you think of that strange man?" asked Estelle, after he had gone.

"I know not what to think, my daughter; he is a horrid object to look upon, and why he should wish to serve me I do not know; doubtless his deformities make him an object of ridicule among his lawless comrades, and he seeks to get service where discipline will make him respected."

"So I think, father, and comes to win your favor by a service."

"So it would seem; when he returns, if Wainright reports that he told the truth, I will question him more and see if he will not help me turn the tables upon the smugglers by attacking them."

"There seems that about him, that causes me to think he will refuse to do as you wish," said Estelle, quietly, and father and daughter stood in silence awaiting the return of the boat.

At length Captain Norman broke the silence with:

"I believe I was a veritable fool to allow Wainright to go with him. I fear he may lead the boy into a snare."

"I do not think so, father. Ah, there comes a boat now!" and Estelle pointed out over the dark waters, where was indistinctly seen a boat approaching, and without the sound of an oar.

"It is he! Well, Wainright, what have you discovered?" asked the captain as the midshipman and his guide suddenly appeared before him.

"My discoveries, sir, were not of a pleasant nature, I fear, as, under the guidance of this personage here I was taken to a position where I beheld a large number of men preparing for an attack evidently, and upon the schooner, as the conversation I overheard plainly told me."

"There were enough of them to be dreaded, eh?" carelessly asked the captain.

"There were, sir; and more, I was taken to three positions where guns are mounted and commanding the schooner where she lies."

"Then with a storm coming upon us, a threatened attack by boats, and lying under three batteries we certainly are in danger," said Captain Norman, with considerable anxiety in his tones, in spite of an effort to avoid showing uneasiness.

"You have found, sir, that I have told you the truth; now you will believe that it was to serve you that I came and placed myself in your power."

"Your words so far have proved true, and I am inclined to trust you; what is your name?"

"My comrades have a name for me that is as ghastly as my appearance; you may call me by that name—Dick Dead-Eye."

"You are appropriately named, and if they

had added to it by calling you Dick Dead-Eye the Hunchback, they would have left nothing unsaid," unfeelingly remarked Captain Norman, but his words seemed to have no effect upon the hideously-deformed being before him, who quietly remarked:

"Captain, yonder coming storm will break upon us within half an hour, and during its greatest fury we must stand out to sea, for, with the first lull the smugglers will attack you. Is all in readiness, sir?"

"I can have the schooner in readiness to meet the storm in five minutes; but, let me tell you one thing:—I still doubt you, and years ago I was wrecked on this coast by a smuggler who professed friendship; so I will have two men stand by you at the wheel, and the moment you run the schooner into danger, I will order them to cut you down, or send a bullet through your heart."

"So be it, Captain Norman. I accept the terms," remarked Dick Dead-Eye.

"Very well. Now take your place at the wheel, and, Mr. Wainright, call the crew all on deck," and Captain Norman motioning to two seamen to guard the strange man who had so mysteriously boarded the schooner, descended into the cabin, accompanied by Estelle, who, from some unaccountable reason had taken a strange interest in the mysterious being who had called himself Dick Dead-Eye.

CHAPTER XII.

THE MYSTERIOUS PLOT.

WHEN Captain Norman again came on deck he was dressed in his storm suit, and by his side was Estelle, enveloped in a heavy cloak, for she had declined to remain below, when she knew the danger threatening the lives of all on board the schooner.

At the wheel stood Dick Dead-Eye, the two seamen standing near with drawn cutlasses, and the crew had gone quietly to their posts, while Lieutenant Randolph was getting the Vixen ready for the storm, the roar of which grew louder each moment, and the vessel already began to rise and fall upon the surging waters, which proved to all that the schooner was indeed in an unsafe anchorage, in spite of appearances to the contrary.

Nearer and nearer came the storm, until the howling of the winds and roar of the waves became awful to listen to.

"Now stand ready forward to raise that anchor!"

It was the voice of Dick Dead-Eye, and it proved to all that, whatever his form and face might be in deformity, his tones were as clear as a trumpet and had a ring in them that inspired confidence.

"Captain, in five minutes more the hurricane will strike the island and that will break its shock against the schooner; but, after the first blow we must scud away before it."

"But that will not carry us to sea," anxiously said the captain.

"Very true, sir, the storm is far more severe than I had believed, and it would be impossible for us to beat out to sea."

"Then in Heaven's name what is to be

done?" cried Captain Norman, now thoroughly alarmed.

"Scud away among the islands down the coast."

"A desperate chance; it is as dark as darkness can make it; the waters will be cut up savagely, and—"

"And yet I can pilot you to safety; I told you I came on board your vessel to save it."

"True, from an attack."

"I have the ability to save you from wreck; but the hurricane is upon us—down all!"

With a savageness that was appalling, and bearing on its wings of wind stone, shells, gravel and sticks, torn from the island in its course, the storm struck the waters, hurled them into a mass of foam, and then burst upon the devoted vessel with a force that sent it over upon its beam-ends.

Instantly the hold of Estelle gave way from the taffrail, where she was clinging, and she would have been borne into the sea by the huge wave that swept the deck, had not Dick Dead-Eye seen her danger, and springing forward seized her in his strong arms.

Then, still holding her firmly, he issued his orders in trumpet tones, while the alarmed guests came rushing to the deck, believing that the schooner was lost.

"Now let that anchor swing clear! That's it, my lads! set the foremast staysail and mizzen-sail!" cried Dick Dead-Eye, and the sails, having been already reefed down close, were at once set by the crew, and like a mad racer the Vixen dashed away over the wild waters, rushing blindly into the storm and darkness.

Releasing his hold upon Estelle, Dick Dead-Eye sprung nimbly to the wheel, and threw aside the two quartermasters who held it, at the same time shouting:

"Let no one speak to me now! Stand ready, crew, to obey orders!"

In spite of the roar all heard his voice, and clinging to taffrail, ratlines, and the mast, all turned their eyes alternately into the dense darkness ahead and then upon the tall, solitary form at the wheel.

Not a word was spoken, not a cry was given, but in dead silence they awaited the result, while, apparently piercing the gloom ahead, Dick Dead-Eye put his wheel to starboard of port, and kept busy with the desperate work in hand.

In this way moments passed away, the schooner one moment rushing through smooth water comparatively, as though under the lee of some island, and then again appearing to be in the midst of breakers, the noise of which arose above the howling of the winds.

Still in the darkness and blinding spray not a single eye could detect the land or ragged reefs they knew that they were everywhere surrounded with, and in expectant horror could only hold their breath and wait.

Not an instant did that deformed but powerful form at the wheel hesitate, for his changes of course were made with the rapidity of lightning, and the few stern orders he gave to the men about the sails, showed that his voice was as firm as though no danger was near.

That he could see ahead they knew was

impossible, unless, whispered a few of the more superstitious, he was the devil himself, or some wizard of the waves that was playing with the schooner for his own amusement.

Thus half an hour passed, and still the Vixen drove on, for the storm showed no signs of abating, and then the time went by, until all felt that their mad pace had continued for an hour.

At length the roaring of the waters grew more fearful, and the wind seemed to sweep the sea with more force than ever before, while from forward came the thrilling cry:

"Breakers dead ahead!"

"Did you hear, sir?" yelled Captain Norman, springing to the side of the mysterious pilot and shouting in his ear, while he clung firmly to his daughter.

"I heard, sir," was the calm answer, and not a point was the course of the schooner changed.

But louder and louder grew the roar of the breakers, and wilder came the cries from forward of breakers dead ahead. Still the mysterious pilot held on as before.

"Ha! you then intend to wreck us! Here, men, shoot this hound if the vessel touches a rock. He at least shall die, be our fate what it may."

The two men sprung nimbly to the side of the pilot, and at that instant there came a vivid flash of lightning, and the eyes of all seemed to rest in that instant upon two things—the wild mass of foam not a cable's length ahead, and the hideous face of the pilot, whose dead eye seemed to glitter like a diamond in the glare, as it looked straight into the danger toward which they were rushing.

"Beware, pilot! your life if she strikes," cried Captain Norman.

"So be it," was the imperturbable reply, and the next moment the schooner was in the churning waters, and all held their breath for the shock they felt must come.

But no shock came, and, after being tossed about for a moment, and almost drowned with spray, the schooner flew out of the white foam, and drove on into deep water, while a heartfelt sigh of relief broke from the lips of every one on board, even from Dick Dead-Eye.

"Captain Norman, you have just passed through the channel where your schooner was wrecked some years ago," said the pilot.

"Ha! by that wretch Lucas, who was hung for it."

"Yes, he was hung for his act," calmly said the pilot.

"Be careful that you do not meet his fate, sir."

"I have been careful, Captain Norman; all danger is passed now, and in a few moments we will be in what is known as Lucas's Bay."

"How you have brought this vessel through the storm and darkness, surrounded as we have been by islands, reefs and rocks, I cannot tell; but you have certainly won our admiration, and you shall not go unrewarded," said Captain Norman, as the schooner entered the comparatively quiet waters of the little haven, on the shore of which had stood the Lucas cabins, but where now were only charred ruins.

"I know this coast as I do my alphabet, sir,

and have run by reckoning; but it was no child's work, I assure you, and I expect as my reward that you make me one of your crew."

"You shall be quartermaster, and if you do me further service I expect of you, deformed though you are, you shall hold a commission."

"I wish none; I would only be an object of scorn and ridicule with the aristocratic officers, as I am with my humble smuggler comrades," said Dick Dead-Eye, with bitterness of tone.

"As you wish, but you have it in your power to wear an epaulette," and Captain Norman called to Lieutenant Randolph to let the anchor fall and put the schooner in ship-shape after the dangerous gantlet it had run, after which he turned to descend into the cabin, his daughter following him.

As she approached Dick Dead-Eye, she held forth her hand, and said in her earnest way:

"Allow me to thank you, sir, for the service you have rendered us all. Your past life may have been one of crime, but your own heart must feel that you have more than redeemed yourself in saving the lives of us all."

"Lady," and Dead-Eye spoke in a low tone, "what I did, I did for *you alone*, for my bitterest hatred rests upon your father and his crew."

With an exclamation of surprise, Estelle drew away her hand and passed on into the cabin, while Dick Dead-Eye walked forward among the crew, who greeted him with a deafening cheer, to which sign of admiration he paid not the slightest notice.

CHAPTER XIII.

THE SMUGGLERS CAPTURE A PRISONER.

THE morning after the storm the sun arose in a cloudless sky, though the waves yet ran rough at sea and fell with a heavy thud upon the shore; but within the cliff-sheltered haven the Vixen rode quietly at a single anchor.

At an early hour Captain Norman in his gig rowed ashore, where, bidding the crew await his coming, he had strolled back up the glen to the little graveyard where rested the wife he had so dearly loved.

Half an hour he passed, gazing sadly down upon the mound, and then turned to go, when there came the stern command:

"Not a word, not a step, or you are a dead man!"

Captain Norman glanced quickly around him, while his hand dropped upon his sword-hilt, but he saw no one near him, yet he knew that the speaker was concealed in a dense mass of cedar bushes near by.

A brave man at heart, he was not willing to submit tamely without knowing the strength of his foe, and he said, calmly:

"Who is it that thus addresses me?"

"It is one that speaks to you, but many surround you, and a score of rifles cover your heart—rifles held by the willing hands of the Coast Smugglers," was the stern response.

"Seeing is believing; if you are many I submit, but if only one or two, why let the best man win," and he walked boldly toward the cedar bushes.

But he was met half-way, for there issued

forth a score of rough-looking, heavily-bearded men, all of them carrying arms in their hands.

"You are the winners in this game. What do you wish with me?" said Captain Norman, knowing that if he called for aid it would cost him his life.

"You shall be free to return to your vessel if you accept our conditions," said the spokesman.

"Name them!"

"Give up our leader and we will give you up."

"But I have not possession of your leader."

"You have; we know it."

Captain Norman started; had he then the smuggler chief in his power in the person of Dick Dead-Eye?

No, such could not be the case, as he had always believed that Dick Lucas was the leader of the Smugglers of the Coast, so he asked:

"Who is your chief, may I ask?"

"One you have often heard of—one who has eluded you for years, and now that you have him in your power you would make suffer the same doom you dealt out to his father."

"Ha! it is then as I believed; you refer to Dick Lucas?"

"Ay, ay, captain—we mean Dick Lucas, the Boy Smuggler, as he is called."

"I have not such a person in my power."

"You have, I again repeat, for he went out to reconnoiter last night and has not returned; you run the gauntlet of the islands and came here and anchored through the worst storm we ever had on this coast, and there is but one man that could have brought you through, and that is, the Boy Smuggler, so we know he is on board the schooner; we knew it as soon as our lookout reported that you were anchored here, instead of having gone to the bottom as we hoped and believed you had."

"I repeat, your leader is not on board my vessel; I only wish he was."

"Captain, a man who wears the epaulettes of a United States naval officer should not lie," was the cool response.

With an angry brow Captain Norman stepped toward the speaker, but a dozen hands dropped on the hilts of as many cutlasses, and, realizing how thoroughly he was in the power of his captors, he said, angrily:

"Nor do I lie, as I can prove."

"Then what has become of Dick Lucas?"

"That I cannot tell."

"Then we hold you responsible; his boat came ashore this morning at daylight, several miles up the coast, and he is missing."

"Perhaps he was drowned?"

"Not he; he was not born to be drowned, nor hung either, my good captain. We hate to doubt your word, but we do, and your life is in danger as long as we believe you have done away with our chief."

"How can I prove to you that I know nothing of him?"

The man was silent a moment and one of his comrades whispered something to him, and he said, quickly:

"Ah, yes, your daughter is on board the schooner, captain, for we saw her as you came in yesterday."

"Yes, what then?"

"We will take *her* word; send for her."

"Never! Do you think I would place her in your vile power?"

"Be careful, Captain Norman, for you are in our power; but, bad as we may be, we would never harm beautiful Estelle, the little waif that lived among us years ago, and her word we will believe, so, if you wish to save your life, send for her."

"I will not."

"Yes you will, Captain Norman, for you do not wish to share the fate you visited upon our old chief, Captain Lucas."

Captain Norman started visibly, for he felt that he was indeed in danger, and the thought of being hung was madness; but he remained silent for an instant, and then said:

"You would not dare do such a thing."

"Try us!" was the laconic reply.

"What! you would hang me?"

"As certainly as you hung the captain: so you see your danger. We will pledge our words that harm shall not befall your beautiful daughter, and she may at once return to the schooner with you, after she has pledged us her honor that Dick Lucas is not on board."

"What trust can I put in the word of smugglers?" sneered the captain.

"We will keep our word though, so, if you care to live send for your daughter."

"How can I?"

"Write her a note; one of our men will take it to your boat, and tell the coxswain to go aboard after her."

"Very well," and Captain Norman hastily wrote a few lines in pencil to Estelle, telling her to come on shore where he awaited her at her mother's grave.

This the spokesman of the smugglers took and boldly carried down to the boat and gave to the coxswain.

Fifteen minutes after the gig again grated upon the beach and in it sat Estelle, who was assisted out by the coxswain.

The supposed fisherman, for such he had called himself, was awaiting her, and led her back up the glen, where with surprise she came upon the band who held her father prisoner.

"My father! has harm befallen you?" and Estelle sprung to his side.

"I am in the hands of the Philistines, my daughter. I came to this sacred spot, and these men made me a prisoner and hold my life against that of their boy leader, whom they say I have on board."

"Hold on, captain, and let me do the talking," and the smuggler spokesman turned to Estelle and continued, after a polite bow:

"I hope you have not forgotten those who were once your friends, Miss Estelle?"

"No; I recognize a number of faces that were once most kind to me," said Estelle kindly, and at the same time nodding pleasantly.

"We will be kind to you yet and we have such trust in you, miss, that we have sent for you to save your father's life."

"My father's life in danger?" cried Estelle in alarm.

"It certainly is, miss. You see he is the

worst foe we have and he has done us much harm the past few years, and now we have him in our grip and wish to exchange him for your adopted brother that was—Dick Lucas."

"I confess I do not understand you."

"Well, to make it plain, if the captain gives us up Dick Lucas we will release him; but it will be only because we love the boy and wish to save him, and will spare your father on your account, miss."

"But my father has not got Dick as a prisoner."

"Is that true, Miss Estelle?"

"As far as my knowledge goes."

"And he was not captured last night?"

"No."

"But you were in the cabin, miss."

"On the contrary; I was on deck all the time, even through the storm."

"And Dick Lucas is not on board the Vixen?"

"He is not."

"Miss Estelle, yonder is the grave of your mother; you would not stand by it and tell us a falsehood?"

The maiden's face flushed, and she seemed about to make an angry retort; but she said calmly, checking herself:

"By my mother's memory I swear to you that I speak the truth."

"So be it; I believe you, and fear the poor boy is dead. Captain Norman, you and Miss Estelle can return on board the schooner, and if you will take my warning you had better not bring ladies with you on this part of the coast. It would give us pleasure to hang you, sir; but, as we gave our word, you can go."

"Hold on a bit! Captain, we certainly believed you had Dick on board, and that he had been forced to run you to a safe anchorage to save his life, and was willing the more to do it seeing as you had ladies on board the Vixen; but, as he did not do it, just tell me who was your pilot through the islands last night?"

"That matter does not concern you, so that it was not your leader."

"Well, whoever it was knew his duty, and if it was not Dick, then it was—"

"Who?" asked the captain, as the speaker paused.

"The ghost of Captain Lucas, for the old man and his son were the only two that could have saved the schooner last night."

Captain Norman gave a light laugh, and continued on his way, Estelle hanging upon his arm, while the smugglers stood silently gazing after them.

Reaching the gig, Captain Norman aided Estelle into the stern-sheets, and springing in himself gave the order to pull rapidly back to the schooner, for he still felt uncomfortable in the vicinity of the outlaw band.

Once on deck he sternly ordered:

"Randolph, train a gun on shore and fire at the base of yonder tall pine tree."

"Ay, ay, sir! Clear that stern gun there!"

"Hold! Father, that tree shelters my mother's grave," cried Estelle.

"True, I had forgotten. Hold on, Randolph; but order three boats' crews in readiness to go on shore, and send that fellow Dead-Eye to me," and Captain Norman entered the cabin,

CHAPTER XIV.

SENTENCED TO DEATH.

OBEYENT to the command Dead-Eye appeared before his captain, who said quietly:

"I would like to ask you, my man, if you care to make a good round sum, and also win a commission for yourself?"

"In what way, captain?" was the almost indifferent response.

"I will tell you. This morning, you may know, I went on shore?"

"Yes, sir; I saw you row away in the gig."

"Well, upon the land yonder lies buried my wife, who was wrecked many years ago, and at her grave this morning I was confronted by a number of smugglers who made me a prisoner, and intended to hold me as a hostage for their leader, Dick Lucas, who it seems left them last night to reconnoiter my vessel."

"Not returning as they expected, the Vixen leaving her anchorage in the storm and running to this haven in safety, they believed that I had captured their young chief, and only upon the word of my daughter did they allow me to depart."

"Now, I desire to utterly wipe out this smuggler band, and, a few years ago, under the guidance of a man who turned traitor to them, I did find their haunts and do them much damage, besides capturing their vessel and crew, as you may remember."

"I remember the circumstances perfectly, sir, as also that the traitor was hung on the cliff in full view of your vessel."

"True, but he was a fool to remain on this coast after his treachery; he should have gone elsewhere, and he would have been in no danger."

"But now to business. You have said you were a member of the smuggler band—you have shown your ability as a seaman and pilot, and I feel that I can trust you, and if you will head an expedition to the secret caves of these smugglers, and so arrange that the Flyaway will fall into my hands, I will give you every cent of my prize money in the affair, and get you a commission as a junior officer in the navy."

"It is a base thing to be a traitor, captain," said Dead-Eye, in a tone that Captain Norman could not understand.

"To become a traitor to a good cause and to honest comrades, yes; but to a bad cause and outlaw companions, no."

"It is all the same; the brand of traitor is one of infamy."

"But remember the inducements I offer—nay, I will see that you receive a larger sum than the prize money will amount to, and if you do not care to accept the commission, I will petition Congress to give you a handsome income to live upon."

"And if I refuse, sir?"

"But you will not think of refusing?" said the captain, anxiously.

"But if I refuse, Captain Norman?" again quietly asked Dick Dead-Eye.

"Then, sir," and Captain Norman sprang to his feet in angry vehemence, "then, sir, I will have you hung like a dog, so help me Heaven!"

"I have saved your vessel, sir, and the lives of your crew," was the unmoved rejoinder.

"Had you ten times saved my life, it would make no difference, for, by your own confession I would hang you."

"Perhaps Congress, which would grant me a living, would pardon me for the service I have rendered?"

"No! for Congress shall never know of you until you are dead, as I shall hang you by to-morrow's sunrise, if you refuse. Come, don't be a fool, man, but accept my offer, and aid me, as I know you can, to capture this entire smuggler band."

"I will not prove a traitor to my companions, Captain Norman, outlaws though they are. I came to your aid, not because I cared for you, or your crew, for you have been our persistent enemies, and I hate you all; but to save from harm your beautiful daughter."

"I asked for my reward to remain on your vessel as one of its crew, and you granted my request, and there my service ends, except in the discharge of my duty on board ship."

Dick Dead-Eye had spoken in a low, calm tone, and Captain Norman felt that he was in earnest, and cried savagely:

"Then, sir, with the rising of to-morrow's sun you die; you shall be hung!"

"So be it; better death at the yard-arm, than be a traitor to my comrades, be they ever so vile."

"Ho the deck!"

"Ay, ay, sir," answered an officer, entering the cabin.

"Place this man in double irons, and confine him in the hold."

With some surprise in his face, the officer obeyed, for he could not understand why a man who had saved the schooner and all on board, should now be so severely treated by his commander.

Dick Dead Eye even held out his hands for the heavy irons to be placed around his wrists, and then, without a word, was led from the cabin, just as Estelle entered it from an adjoining state-room, an angry flash in her eyes.

"Father! father! I have heard all; what have you done?" she cried.

"Done my duty in sentencing to death that vile smuggler."

"A man to whom we all owe our lives!"

"It matters not; he shall die!"

"And to-morrow?"

"No; I will give him several days to live—at least until I capture his comrades without his aid, to keep him company in hanging. Lieutenant Randolph!"

"Yes, Captain Norman," said that young officer, presenting himself.

"Are the boats ready?"

"Yes, sir, and the crews in them."

"Very well; land and make a thorough search of the shores in this neighborhood, visiting the old haunts of the smugglers, which you remember, and returning only with the set of the sun, unless you make some important discoveries; but mind you, keep your men as close together as is possible, for you may be attacked."

"Ay, ay, sir!" and the lieutenant retired, and shortly after the boats rowed shoreward on their hunt for smugglers.

CHAPTER XV.

IN AN ENEMY'S POWER.

WITH the approach of evening the boats came rowing slowly back from the shore, and Lieutenant Randolph made his report.

He had carefully searched the coast for a league up and down, had even gone inland, and not a sign of a smuggler had been seen.

The old haunts and caves had been visited, but bore the impress of desertion long before, and the few rude fishermen dwelling on the shores, could, or would not, tell anything regarding the outlaws.

"They shall not escape me, for I shall search two leagues of the coast each day, and to-morrow shall tow out of this basin and anchor a league above here," said Captain Norman.

"This is a dangerous coast in storms, sir, as we have experienced," suggested Lieutenant Randolph.

"Yes, but after the severe blow of last night it will doubtless be some time before we have another one, and I shall risk it," was the response of Captain Norman, and at daylight the following morning the Vixen, with her boats ahead, moved out of the basin and headed up the coast, where she dropped anchor just off a point of land that gave her guns a good range up and down the shore.

After the anchor was let fall, Captain Norman himself led the men in their search ashore; but at nightfall the party returned utterly worn out by their long tramp and scramble over the rocks.

Yet, with the dawn of another day the Vixen again moved up the coast, and dropping anchor in a comparatively open bay, the regular smuggler hunt began again, but as before, without the slightest sign of the outlaws or their retreats having been discovered, although Captain Norman had offered large inducements to the few humble fishermen who dwelt on the coast to guide them to the rendezvous of the band.

On the evening of the third day the crew were almost worn out, and, excepting the watch on duty, all retired at an early hour to rest, and were soon fast asleep; but, when the middle watch came on deck, they noticed that the sky was becoming rapidly overcast with dark clouds, and Lieutenant Randolph deemed it his duty to acquaint Captain Norman with the circumstance, for the Vixen lay in an extremely exposed anchorage, should the storm break from seaward, as it threatened.

"I don't like it at all, Randolph, for it looks as though another hurricane was brewing," said Captain Norman, anxiously casting his eyes around him as he came on deck.

"It will be impossible to beat out to sea, sir, as open as it looks, for I observed at low tide today, that there were hundreds of sunken rocks in that direction," said Lieutenant Randolph.

"Curse these smugglers, they will yet cost me my ship and my life," muttered Captain Norman, as he continued to gaze around him at the gathering storm; then he added aloud:

"I see but one thing to do—get out both anchors, with plenty of cable, house the topmasts, and attempt to ride the gale out."

"It is our only course, sir, that I can see," and Lieutenant Randolph called to the boatswain to

pipe all hands on deck, and the tired crew were soon at work, though they grumbled to themselves at their commander for keeping them continually in such danger, just to capture a band of smugglers who only deprived the government of a few thousands yearly in duties.

Knowing how hazardous was their anchorage, and observing that the storm seemed to increase in fury as it neared them, the seamen stood watching its approach with most anxious regard, while awakened by the noise on deck, and the low, ominous roar of a gale, Estelle and her young friends also arose and dressed themselves, and formed a cowering group near the wheel, for the storm of a few nights before had fully taught them how terrible was the ocean in its fury.

"It is as bad as the other night, sir," whispered Lieutenant Randolph to his commander, as the now terrific roar of the sea and winds sounded like the constant roar of battle.

"It is worse, I fear—at least the thunder and lightning, and our anchors are our only hope," replied Captain Norman, in the same low tones.

"Yes, if the cables break we are lost. Hold hard! down all!" cried Lieutenant Randolph, and as he spoke, the Vixen shrunk back as though in terror, until her anchors brought her up with a jerk.

The next instant the huge white wave, driven by the savage wind, was upon the devoted craft, which was flooded by the rush of waters, and several of the crew forward, were torn from their hold and hurled into the wild waters, their cries for help rising pitifully above the storm.

But no help could come to them, and they were borne away to death.

"She's draggin' her anchors, sir," cried the boatswain from forward, and all started at the cry, as they knew how great was their danger now.

"She drives stern foremost fearfully—the anchors only steady her, sir," said Lieutenant Randolph, coming aft and joining his captain.

"We can do nothing, for if she would bear sail, we know not which way to head," was the almost despondent reply of Captain Norman.

"Father, there is one below who can save your vessel."

Captain Norman started at the voice in his ears, and turning, beheld Estelle, who had crept to his side from her place in the companionway.

"What do you mean, Estelle?"

"Dick Dead-Eye knows these waters."

"God be praised! Ho! Randolph! Bring that smuggler Dead-Eye on deck, and lively, for the land is not far away."

Lieutenant Randolph never waited for the completion of the sentence, but darted below with a ray of hope at his heart, for like his commander, he had entirely forgotten the presence on board of the smuggler.

In a few moments he returned and approached the spot where Captain Norman stood near the wheel.

"Ho! Dead-Eye, we need your aid, for another storm has caught us upon your accursed coast," said the officer, quickly.

Dick Dead-Eye cast a searching look around him, then up into the rigging, and asked calmly:

"Where are you?"

"A league above the bluff where you first joined the schooner," hastily answered Captain Norman.

"Off a rocky point of land, with a high hill in the back-ground?"

"You have described it exactly."

"How far from the land?"

"We anchored nearly a mile away; but we have been dragging our anchors for ten minutes—Ha! did you see by that lightning-flash?"

"I saw," was the cool response.

"What?"

"That your vessel will go to pieces in ten minutes."

"Great God! but you can save her," cried the now thoroughly alarmed captain.

"I can, yes."

"And you will?"

"No!"

The answer came firmly and distinctly.

"Heavens! you cannot mean it."

"I do."

"But you will be lost with us."

"What fear of drowning can a man have who is doomed to be hanged?"

"No, I will spare your life, so take the wheel, my good fellow."

"I will not."

"And you will allow us all to die, when you can save us?"

"Yes."

The man stood unmoved, his arms folded upon his breast, and around him were the officers of the Vixen, one and all of them white with dread.

"Man, you seek a fearful revenge. I tell you I will spare your life—nay, I will grant any request you make to me," pleaded Captain Norman.

"Mere words, and they have no effect upon me. You and your crew are doomed to die."

As Dead-Eye spoke a slender form glided forward and confronted him.

It was Estelle, and she laid her hand upon his arm, and said softly:

"You may be an outlaw, sir, you may have cause for revenge, but you have a heart and will not let us die, when you can save us—I know that you will not."

The man cast one glance into the pleading face looking up into his own, then turning quickly his strong hands grasped the wheel, and his loud clear voice shouted:

"To your posts all! In with those anchors, lads, and get the schooner under what sail she will carry."

A yell of joy broke from the lips of both officers and men, and nimbly they sprung to work, and not a moment too soon, for a flash of vivid lightning, that lit up both land and sea, showed to all the wild, ragged shores, not three cable's lengths away.

But at the helm stood the tall form of the man who once before had saved the Vixen, and in spite of his deformities, one and all had perfect confidence in him, and obeyed promptly his every order, while he guided them through the storm and darkness once more to safety.

CHAPTER XVI. THE ESCAPE.

WHEN in danger of losing his vessel, and with

the lives of all on board in the hands of one man, Captain Norman was willing to make any promise required of him; but when the morning sun arose in a cloudless sky, and the storm had passed away, like one who dreads ghosts by night, but is brave by day, the commander of the Vixen forgot his good resolves and ordered Dick Dead-Eye into his presence.

"Well, my man, as you have a second time proven your ability to aid me in destroying the smugglers upon this coast, I suppose you will now accept my former generous offers to you?"

"That is, to win riches and rank by betraying my former comrades, sir?"

"Yes, and I will be even more generous."

"Your offer will be refused as before, sir."

"What?"

"I swear it."

"By Heaven! you care little for life."

"I love life, sir."

"Then you will consent to my demand and save it?"

"Never, sir."

"Then you shall go again into irons, and, I mean it, to-morrow you shall be hanged."

"Captain Norman, you could not be so base," cried Dick Dead-Eye, in surprise.

"I will do as I say; to save my vessel and those on board, I promised you your life, and I hoped you would come to your senses and think better of my offer to you; but as you again refuse, I will keep my word and you shall die."

"Captain Norman, you are a villain—even worse than I believed you to be," was the deep response of Dead-Eye.

"I will not quarrel with a man condemned to die, on account of epithets he bestows on me. I offer you your life, money, and rank, if you will serve the Government in ridding this coast of a desperate band of outlaws; you refuse, and I say you shall die."

Dick Dead-Eye made no reply and was again placed in irons and taken to the schooner's hold, to the great surprise of the crew, who now felt more kindly toward him, in spite of his being a smuggler.

But, believing that their commander was only trying to frighten him into betraying his comrades, and really meant him no harm, they passed the affair over without much comment.

But though the crew of the Vixen had a better opinion of their commander than to believe he would carry out his threat and hang Dick Dead-Eye, Captain Norman was in deadly earnest, and gave orders to Lieutenant Randolph when he entered his cabin that night, to have all arrangements made for the smuggler at sunrise, the following morning.

"My dear sir, pardon me if I say that you can not mean it," said the astonished lieutenant.

"I was never more in earnest, Randolph; but one thing will save his life."

"And that is—"

"That he consents to betray his comrades."

"I am sorry, sir; and the crew also will regret to see him die," said the lieutenant, sadly.

"It matters not; he shall be hanged at the appointed hour," sternly said the commander of the Vixen.

"As we have lady guests on board, would it

not be as well, Captain Norman, to put off the execution until we return to port?" asked Lieutenant Randolph, hoping that by delaying the carrying out of the sentence, something might arise to save the smuggler's life.

"No! At sunrise none but the crew will be on deck. You have my orders, Mr. Randolph; see that they are obeyed."

The young officer made no reply, but bowed and retired, and Captain Norman turned to enter his state-room, when he was confronted by Estelle.

"My daughter, I thought you had retired," said the father, his face flushing with shame.

"No, I could not rest when my father was on the eve of committing a great crime," was the low, but firm reply.

"Estelle, how dare you speak to me in that way?"

"I dare do anything to prevent my father from doing a deed of dishonor, that is worse than murder."

"What? Go to your state-room this instant and never address me again until you ask pardon for your words," angrily said Captain Norman.

"No, no, father! Hear me, and do not let that poor man die! He came on board your vessel and saved you from being surprised and defeated by the smugglers; he saved you again in the storm, and a third time, last night, he guided you to a safe harbor when we were all on the eve of death; for my sake spare him."

"He knows how his life can be saved; let him consent, and honor awaits him. Now return to your state-room, Estelle, and remember, I am very angry with you."

So saying, Captain Norman entered his own state-room, and Estelle slowly returned to her own; the lights in the cabin were lowered, and all was soon after quiet on board the Vixen.

But, out of the-cabin came a form enveloped in a heavy cloak, and, going upon deck, approached Midshipman Wainright, who was the officer on watch.

"Mr. Wainright, I suppose you know of the intention of my father to have the man known as Dick Dead-Eye hanged at sunrise?"

The young officer started with surprise and delight, for he was always glad to have Estelle near him.

"Yes, Miss Estelle, and I am sorry that such is the case," he answered.

"So am I, and, in hopes that the man may save his life by consenting to my father's demands, I have a desire to see him to urge him to do so; please permit me to see him."

"It may be doing wrong on my part, Miss Estelle, but I will have him brought on deck, as it was you who urged him to become our pilot, last night."

"Please let him be brought here quietly, without attracting attention, for I would see him alone."

"If you will kindly act as officer of the deck, I will go and fetch him myself," said the young officer, and saluting playfully, he disappeared, and in ten minutes more Dick Dead-Eye approached Estelle, holding in his hands the chains that were fastened to his feet.

"Be seated, sir; I would speak with you,"

said Estelle, quietly, and placing a stool for him, and another for the maiden, Midshipman Wainright walked forward out of ear-shot.

The smuggler bowed and sunk down upon the seat, for his chains were heavy, and drawing near him, Estelle said in a low tone:

"Do you know that you are doomed to die at sunrise?"

"Yes, lady."

"Do you know that you can save your life?"

"Yes; by betraying my comrades."

"And that you refuse to do?"

"Assuredly."

"You will be hanged."

"I know it, lady."

"Life is not then dear to you?"

"Life is very dear to me, but my honor is dearer."

"A smuggler talk thus! I am surprised."

"Doubtless, and for one as deformed as I, to speak sentiments of honor sounds strange indeed; but I will die, as you shall see, before I betray my comrades to death."

For a moment Estelle was silent; then she asked:

"Tell me why you came on board this schooner?"

"I will frankly tell you, lady; circumstances over which I had no control made me what I am, a smuggler, an outlaw, and one whom some even call a pirate."

"I tried to lead a better life, but was prevented, and I now am a hunted man; but I determined to save you, and your father and his men, and came on board your vessel, hoping to remain as an honest seaman and to bury the past; but, an outlaw, your father sought to make me betray my comrades, and my refusal to do so will cost me my life."

"You shall not die! Here, hold out your hands."

The man started, and cried in an eager tone:

"What would you do, lady?"

"I would prevent my father from committing a great crime, by hanging one who has nobly served him. Here! I have the keys of your irons; I took them from my father's desk; let me release you, for the officer of the deck is not looking, and no one can see you leave the schooner."

"You are a noble woman, and never will I forget you for this. I accept my liberty, lady, at your hands."

The man spoke earnestly, and with the deepest feeling, while Estelle quietly unlocked the iron bands upon his wrists and ankles, and let the chains down easily upon the deck.

"You can swim?"

"Like a fish, lady."

"Then watch your chance, slip over the bulwark, and lower yourself into the sea. Yonder is the shore, not three cable-lengths away," and Estelle pointed through the darkness to where a wooded point of land was dimly visible.

"Heaven bless you, lady; farewell!"

The deformed being bent before her, grasped her hand, imprinted thereon a burning kiss, and the next instant noiselessly slipped over the bulwarks.

Estelle heard no splash in the water, and for

a long time sat in silence, wondering if the man had escaped.

Then to her ears from the wooded shore came the distinct hoot of an owl, followed immediately by the long-drawn howl of a wolf, and afterward by the shrill whistle of a bird.

"He has escaped, thank Heaven! those are his signals to let me know. Mr. Wainright!"

"Ay, ay, Miss Estelle," said the young officer approaching.

"You can have those chains removed, please."

"Heaven above! and the prisoner?" cried the midshipman, in alarm.

"Has escaped at my request; I will bear all the blame; good-night, sir," and Estelle re-entered the cabin, leaving the young officer standing on the deck a picture of amazement, yet rejoicing that Dick Dead-Eye was not to be executed at sunrise, but dreading to meet his commander.

"By Neptune! but there will be the devil to pay," he muttered, as he began to pace to and fro, lost in admiration at the cool daring of Estelle.

CHAPTER XVII.

THE ATTACK.

FOR a long time after Estelle left the deck, Midshipman Wainright paced to and fro, his thoughts upon the beautiful girl he really loved with all the devotion of his youthful heart.

In fact he was so taken up with his own thoughts of love, that he really forgot his duties as an officer of the deck, and, upon the principle of

"Like master like man,"

the crew on watch were taking "cat naps" against the masts or bulwarks, and not gazing out upon the waters as they should have done, when they knew that danger surrounded them.

At length the dawn was not very far off, and the hour approached which has been said to be the darkest, just before day, but which I have never been able to verify, and in his hopeful dream of blissful love in the future, the handsome young officer failed to observe some dark objects out upon the waters slowly drawing nearer to the schooner.

If had he been watching, he would have observed that they were boats, six in number, crowded with men, and coming noiselessly on under the impulse of muffled oars.

Arriving within a cable's length of the schooner, they divided, two remaining stationary and two going off at right and left angles.

Those that thus diverged, after gaining a given point, also separated, and in twenty minutes more the six boats were at the four main points of the compass, that is, one was not far away from the stern of the Vixen, one an equal distance off the bow, and two upon each broadside.

Then as the dismal hoot of an owl was heard, the six boats moved noiselessly forward toward a common center, and had approached within a few lengths of the schooner ere Midshipman

Wainright awakened from his dream to stern reality.

Then only the presence, rather than the sight of danger aroused him, and in trumpet tones, he cried:

"Boat ahoy! Steady, or I fire on you!"

But wild yells answered him, and his loud cry of:

"Ho! On deck, lads!" was drowned by the rattle of firearms.

Up from below deck came the Vixen's gallant crew to meet a deadly foe upon their vessel, and at once the combat became fierce and hot, for Captain Norman and his officers cheered on their men, and well all knew that they fought for life or death.

But those who assailed them felt that they had wrongs to revenge, and they had come well prepared to punish the foe who had dogged them so ruthlessly for years, and hoped to wipe out their persistent pursuer, forgetting that as law-breakers the crew of the Vixen had a right to punish them and hunt them to death.

Wilder, fiercer, the struggle went on, the crew of the schooner, though surprised, fighting with indomitable pluck though outnumbered, and the smugglers anxious to crush their adversaries.

At length the dawn broke in the east; still the combat waged, for neither side seemed willing to yield an inch; but as it fighting under a pre-concerted plan, the smugglers kept well together, and at length the Vixen's crew were forced to yield, inch by inch, step by step, until they were driven back upon the quarter-deck.

Then Captain Norman saw that resistance was only useless, and to save his crew he called out:

"Cease firing! I surrender my vessel!"

Instantly a momentary silence followed, and then the leader of the smugglers stepped forward and confronted his foes.

He was the same man who had been spokesman when he captured Captain Norman at the grave of his wife, and his words were deep and threatening, as he said:

"Ay, you would surrender now, proud captain, when your despised foes hold the winning hand; but no; as you would treat us, so we will treat you; nay, we will be more merciful, for we will let you die with arms in your hands, instead of hanging you, as would be our fate, were we in your power."

"What mean you, sirrah," cried Captain Norman.

"I mean that you lied to us. You certainly captured our captain, for, had he been wrecked in the storm, ere this his body would have been washed ashore, and nowhere can we find it. I mean that you have dogged us for years, that you once destroyed our haunts, captured many of us whom you had sentenced to life-long imprisonment, and hung our captain as you would a dog."

"Now you ask in vain for mercy: we will not show it to you or yours. At them, lads, and cut them down!"

With wild yells the smuggler crew dashed again upon their foes, and once more the combat raged as fiercely as before, in fact with

greater ferocity, for the one party fought for life alone, and the other for revenge, the worst of all motives of the human heart.

What the end would be was evident to all, for the smugglers were the victors, and they would soon end the matter to their revengeful liking; but suddenly, over the taffrail of the schooner bounded a tall form, and from his lips broke the stern command in tones that were not to be disputed:

"Hold! I command you!"

Instantly the combat ceased, and every eye was turned upon the stranger, the smugglers gazed in seeming wonder and surprise, the crew of the Vixen with hope, while in the companionway crouched Estelle and her friends, in terror and despair commingled.

"And who are you, sir, may I ask, that single-handed commands obedience here?"

It was the smuggler leader that spoke, and, having recovered from his surprise, he sprung forward and confronted the new-comer, his blood-stained cutlass in hand and on guard.

"I am your chief," was the quiet reply.

"Our chief! Are you mad?" shouted a dozen voices.

"No! behold!"

As he spoke, the rough wig and the straggling beard were torn from his face, and from over one eye was taken a mass of flesh-colored plaster in which was a painted eye, and then the handsome, daring face of Dick Lucas was revealed; and well known in spite of the livid hue of paint that yet covered it, while the hump on his back was now known to be assumed.

"Dick Dead-Eye your chief!" cried Captain Norman, aghast.

"Ay, ay, sir! I am Dick Lucas, alias Dick Dead-Eye, who, to save your daughter assumed this disguise.

"Last night I escaped, thank Heaven, and I am now here to save her from harm, for, reaching my cavern, and finding where my men had gone, I came on after them, and arrived just in time.

"Now, men, back to your boats; and Captain Norman, your services as smuggler-hunter will have to end, for no longer need you look for Dick Lucas and his brave lads on this coast. To your boats, men!"

In surprise yet in perfect obedience the smugglers fell back, while Captain Norman said threateningly:

"Did I dare, I would end your days here."

"Ay, Captain Norman, you would again raise your hand against the one who has served you; but, for your daughter's sake I spare you, even though I swore to revenge myself upon you for cruelly hanging my poor old father. Farewell, and know that she only has saved you from sharing the fate of that old man."

Without another word Dick Lucas, now known to have been serving as Dick Dead-Eye, sprung over the schooner's side into the boat alongside, and with rapid stroke the smugglers pulled for the shore, while Captain Norman, knowing how weak he was to cope with those whom he had come to annihilate, ordered his boats ahead, and slowly towed the Vixen out to sea, when she set sail for Portland, with half of her crew killed and wounded on board.

CHAPTER XVIII.

THE BEGINNING OF THE END.

WHEN the Vixen arrived at Portland Captain Norman found his own desperate affair with the smugglers only a second-rate excitement, as war had been declared between England and the United States, and he was ordered to report with his vessel at Boston, from whence he would have to go upon a more desperate duty than that of fighting coast outlaws.

As he expected that Boston, rather than Portland, would be his rendezvous in the war, he carried Estelle with him to that city, and there left her with a distant relative, while he put to sea in the swift-sailing Vixen to hunt down the enemies of his country, and not at all unwilling to escape from the disagreeable service of smuggler-hunting on a dangerous coast, where he had so nearly lost his vessel and his life on more than one occasion.

Thus was ushered in the war of 1812, and during the three years that it lasted, Captain Norman won for himself and his vessel an enviable reputation; and for the service he had rendered was placed in command of a large sloop-of-war, and ordered to cruise in southern waters, where at that time, as the British were threatening New Orleans and Mobile, their vessels-of-war were more frequently found than elsewhere upon the American coast.

Obedient to orders, Captain Norman set sail for southern seas, and upon his vessel with him went his beautiful daughter, who was anxious to seek a temporary home at some southern port.

One day, as Captain Norman was on deck, promenading with Estelle on his arm, and who had grown more beautiful with each season that had passed over her head, a sail was discovered in the distance.

Instantly the sloop-of-war gave chase and rapidly overhauled the stranger, until the decks of each vessel became visible, when the other squared away in flight, and in spite of the speed of the Reindeer, as the sloop was called, began to drop her astern.

"That is remarkable, for I believed this the fastest vessel afloat," said Captain Norman, with surprise.

"Barring one, sir," said an old lieutenant, who had been a sailor for forty years.

"And that one, Mercer?"

"The Privateer Scorpion, sir."

"Ah, yes; I will yield to that craft, from all I have heard of its speed," said Captain Norman.

"It's the most wonderful craft afloat, sir," continued the old lieutenant.

"I have been in seven different vessels since the war broke out, and I tell you she's been the talk in all of them, for the Scorpion's commander is a man who will fight four times his weight in metal and numbers in men."

"And is always victorious, too, it's said."

"Always, sir. Who he is nobody knows, and he never goes into port, only captures a prize, puts a crew on board, says where he will meet them again, and thus goes on. I tell you, captain, he has had more tough fights and captured more prizes than any cruiser afloat."

"What is his name, Mercer?"

"He's called Captain Seabolt, sir."

"A strange name; but do you think yonder craft can be the Scorpion?"

"It's got the same low hull, lean as a hound and sharp as a razor, sir; then the long, raking masts are like Seabolt's craft, too. Suppose we show our colors, sir?"

"No! just run up the English flag."

"Ay, ay, sir," and the flag of Great Britain floated out from the peak.

Instantly the schooner was seen to round to, and from her bows came a puff of white smoke, while a shot went flying over the deck of the sloop-of-war, and the stars and stripes went up to the peak.

"That's him, sir! that's the Scorpion, for the little devil has fired at us, believing us to be English, and though knowing he dare not fight us, he's not going to show that he's afraid. See, there's our flag."

"You are right, Mercer; now run up the stars and stripes, for that fellow fires too well for us to play as a target! Ha! what is he doing now?" and Captain Norman leveled his glass at the schooner.

"There is a sail off on the horizon, father, and he is heading toward it," said Estelle, who held a sea-glass in her hand.

"You are right; he knows if we are an enemy we are far too large for him, and if an American we can take care of ourselves, so rushes off yonder in hopes of a prize. Keep on your course as before, quartermaster," and Captain Norman offered his arm to Estelle to continue their interrupted promenade.

But ere long there came a cry from the foretop:

"Sail ho!"

All eyes at once turned in the direction indicated by the lookout and beheld two vessels just visible above the eastern horizon, toward which the sun was rapidly declining.

"One is a sloop-of-war—the other a brig, but whether English or American, remains to be seen," said Captain Norman, and giving orders to the helmsman to head toward them he went down into the cabin to tea.

When he again came on deck, accompanied by Estelle, the two vessels were not a league away, and that they were enemies, was now evident.

"The sloop is my own size, and the brig carries fully a dozen guns; but we have a splendid vessel and fine crew, so I'll fight and not run, for it will be a splendid thing if I can capture them. Beat to quarters, Mr. Randolph," said Captain Norman to the officer who then held the deck, and whom the reader already knows, as he does the young lieutenant leaning over the taffrail and gazing sadly at Estelle with one eye and the strange vessel with the other; in fact, both Lieutenant Randolph and Lieutenant Wainright had never given up their hope of winning their commander's beautiful daughter.

"It is taking great odds, sir," said Lieutenant Randolph, glancing meaningly toward Estelle, who, understanding his look, said quickly:

"I trust my presence on board will not cause my father to run from the enemies of his country, although they may be greatly his superior in strength."

"Nobly said, my daughter! No, I had determined to fight them and I will if they sink or capture me. Beat to quarters, Mr. Randolph, and get the ship in fighting trim."

As the drum of the sloop called the crew to their guns, an answering sound from the strange vessel proved that they, too, were preparing for action, and all at once the three vessels were stripping for a combat they felt must be fierce and deadly.

"Now, Estelle, you must go below. Kiss me, my daughter, and take care to go down into the trap in the cabin," said Captain Norman, and he led his daughter to the companionway and there parted with her just as the sea was lighted up by the guns of the English vessel, which was now not very far distant, and coming bravely on to the conflict.

"Answer them, Randolph! Mercer, make your iron dogs bite as well as bark. Wainright, have your boarders ready," cried Captain Norman, and instantly the sloop's guns belched forth angry replies, and the battle was begun in deadly earnest on both sides.

CHAPTER XIX.

IN TIME.

In a number of cases the American sloop-of-war, armed, equipped, and manned as she was with a full crew, might have been successful against two such vessels as were the English sloop and brig; but they happened on this occasion to be in every particular as well prepared for combat as their plucky foe, and from the first poured in a most galling fire.

But having taken the chances, Captain Norman was determined to fight it out to the bitter end and die game if he had to die.

Seeing that they had a splendid vessel to contend against, the English commanders were anxious to capture her without material damage, and at a preconcerted signal ranged down upon her broadside with intention to board.

Seeing their intention, and knowing the sailing qualities of his vessel, and also the heavy metal of his stern guns, Captain Norman determined to attempt to fly, hoping to escape in that way; but, as he gave the order to the helmsman to put away, an unlucky shot from the brig carried away his bowsprit; the American lost steering-way, and a moment after the British were boarding over both broadsides, while their spars mingled with those of the unfortunate craft.

Then began at once a most terrible combat with cutlass and pistol, and outnumbering the Americans and attacking them upon both sides, the English seamen drove them slowly aft, and Captain Norman knowing that further struggle was useless was about to haul down his colors, which floated weirdly in the darkness above the decks, when a clear voice shouted:

"Boarders, follow me!"

All eyes turned in the direction from whence came the voice, and there they beheld the snowy canvas of a large schooner range along the stern of the American sloop; a shock followed, the grapnels were thrown, and over the taffrail bounded a tall, slender form, with cutlass in one hand and pistol in the other, while at his back came four-score brave seamen.

"Down with the British! Rally around me, ye bold tars of the sloop!" cried the young leader, as he sprung into the midst of the English seamen, and, followed by his men, began to force them back in spite of their resistance.

At first Captain Norman did not know whether friend or foe had come upon him, but now as the young leader cried again to his crew he rallied his own sailors and pressed on to the attack.

"Scorpions, show your sting!"

It was the voice of the leader of the rescue-party, and it told both Americans and English that the crew of the famous privateer, Scorpion, with their renowned chief, Seabolt, were on the sloop's deck, and while it gave hope to the one it raised dread in the heart of the other.

But the English were not yet beaten; they fought with the fury of despair, until they were forced upon their own decks; yet there the crews of the American vessels followed them, and after a long and bitter struggle the cry for quarter arose, and the British flags were hauled down!

"You are the victor, sir, the prizes are yours," said Captain Norman, generously, approaching Captain Seabolt where he stood upon the sloop's quarter-deck.

"No, I will share with you the honor, we will take the brig and leave you the sloop."

"Great God!" and Captain Norman started back, while he added:

"Am I deceived in believing you to be Dick Lucas?"

"No, sir; I was Dick Lucas, but not liking either that name or the one of Dick Dead-Eye, I gave it up for that of Richard Seabolt, commander of the American Privateer Scorpion, who is wholly at the service of Captain Norman of the sloop-of-war Reindeer."

"My young friend, I was wrong, very wrong in the past; I believed you dead, and now rejoice to see you alive and bearing an honorable name. Forgive me and forget the past."

"Gladly! And your daughter?"

"Is with me, and will be delighted to know that you have again saved her father. Come with me!" and he led the way into the sloop's cabin, leaving Lieutenants Randolph and Wainright to see to the wounded and prisoners, and neither of them in a pleasant mood at seeing Dick Lucas, Dick Dead-Eye, and the Boy Smuggler all turn up in the daring Seabolt, commander of the famous privateer Scorpion.

CHAPTER XX.

CONCLUSION.

AT the close of the war between the United States and Great Britain, a trim-looking schooner glided up the beautiful Potomac river and dropped anchor in front of Washington city, when a boat put off for the shore, containing four oarsmen, and a young and handsome officer in the stern-sheets.

Arriving at the landing the officer was greeted by cheer after cheer from a large crowd which had gathered there, as several old sailors had recognized in the schooner the noted American Privateer, Scorpion.

Raising his hat politely, Captain Seabolt sprung into a carriage and was driven rapidly

away to the home of the President of the United States, to whom he sent up his name, and gained an immediate audience.

In a frank manner the young officer made known to the President his early life, and how he had drifted into the life of a smuggler, and exhibited letters from both Commodores Bainbridge and Decatur to show the numerous services he had rendered the service in the past and during the war.

"And the splendid career of your vessel I well know, Captain Seabolt, and congratulate you upon having turned your smuggler crew into privateersmen, and to yourself and men I extend a full and free pardon," said the President.

With a happy heart Richard Seabolt, for he had forever dropped his old name, returned to his vessel, delivered it to the navy department, and then set sail for the shores of South Carolina, where, with his prize money, he purchased an elegant estate and fitted it up with every comfort, after which he departed for the North.

Three months passed away before his return, and then he came not alone, for with him was his beautiful bride, once known as Estelle Norman, who had never ceased to love the splendid youth who had been her adopted brother in her girlhood years among the smugglers of the coast of Maine.

THE END.

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